IBSEN

HALDANE MACFALL

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IBSEN

HALDANE
MACFALL

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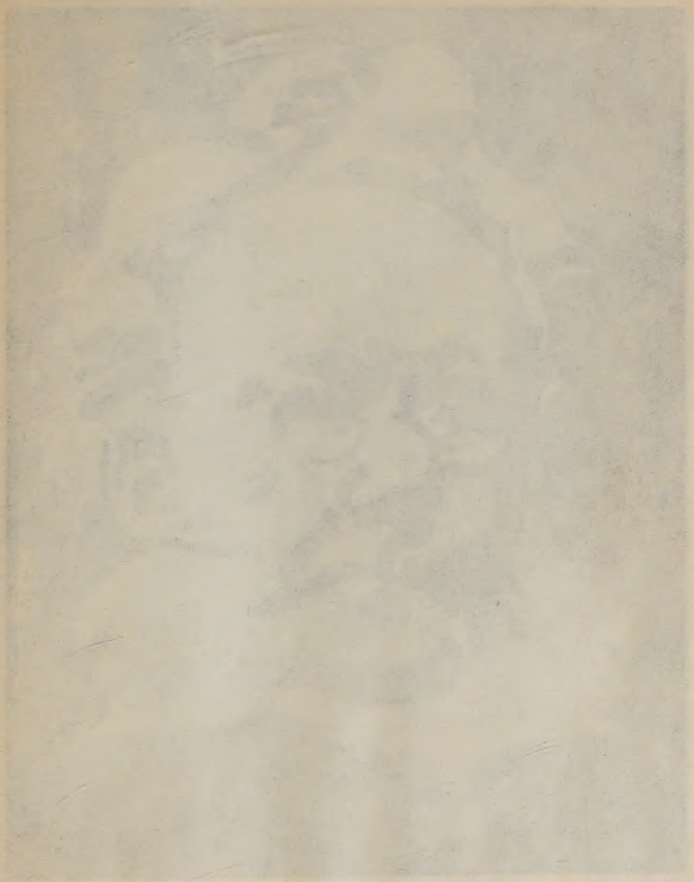

Henrik Ibsen

Joseph Simpson

IBSEN

THE MAN, HIS ART & HIS SIGNIFICANCE

by
HALDANE MACFALL
Author of
The Masterfolk, etc.
Illustrated by
JOSEPH SIMPSON

MORGAN SHEPARD COMPANY
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TO MY FRIEND
PAUL KONODY

THIS SMALL TRIBUTE TO
HIS GOOD COMRADESHIP

The Personal Note

It is clear that to understand IBSEN'S *full significance in art, it is necessary to read his plays.*

I attempt here but to give an impressionistic picture of the man, a record of the accidents of his living that we call life, and a rough estimate of his genius and his significance.

It is not necessary to worship IBSEN *in order to understand him; it is still less necessary to abuse him in order to show that one understands or does not understand him; but it is impossible to ignore him.*

As VOLTAIRE, *and after him* GOETHE, *and* BYRON *after him, and after him* VICTOR HUGO, *were crowned kings of the theatre of the imagination by the world of their day, so* EUROPE, *at the end of the eighteen hundreds, placed the laurels upon this man's brow and bowed the knee or abused him as only the* GREAT *suffer homage.*

With his lyrics and the like I have here little to do. It was not by these that he reached to significance, but by his plays. Yet, when we read some

of his lyrical passages, even if we ignore the lyrics in his dramas, Brandes's deft saying recurs to us, that in IBSEN'S *battle of life a lyric Pegasus was killed under him.*

The main motive of his plays, the thing at which he let drive, I trust may be found in these pages, if in halting fashion—but the wit, the subtleties, the troop of living entities, the grim humour, the biting irony, the play of the greyer humanities, all that crowds the pages of this man's high achievement must be looked for in his master-work.

If I shall have turned some eyes to that master-work, if I shall have aroused at least a few from the dull groping for life amid the hypocrisies and the narrow ways of the sordid wayfaring that Respectability has narrowed within the meagre hedge of lies and humbug which hem the stilted and mean path of the convention-ridden world—even though they awake to find that at first only by trespass over hard and forbidding and stony ground may they reach to the broad high road where real men and women walk, thinking out life fearlessly for themselves, not in subjection to IBSEN *more than to any other man—the labour of this little book will not have been in vain.*

HALDANE MACFALL.

Illustrations by

JOSEPH SIMPSON

COVER DESIGN

FRONTISPIECE—IBSEN

BYORNSEN

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

IBSEN IN OLD AGE

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AND CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF
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THE MAN

THE MAN

"Nor thanks nor threats afflict the man who wholly wills the thing he wills."—Ibsen.

GREY and grim and joyless he sits in his solitary chair, his back to the sombre tyranny of the bleak north, a lonely, unlovely old man. Pipe and glass and bottle on the table at his side; his keen little, spectacled eyes straining towards a new world in vacancy; out of the chaos of things evolving the masterpiece; so sits he there, etched on the tablets of men's minds—Ibsen, the playwright and poet of his age—disguised as a merchant-skipper who takes his ease sadly, arrayed in sober broadcloth, on some drab holy day.

The great shock of hair, that framed the stern face and swept back mane-like from the massive brow, was iron-grey when the world stayed its feet to stop and look upon Henrik

Ibsen

Ibsen—grey, as his features were rugged and lined, when the caricaturists in jesting mood set themselves to limn upon the printed page the fantastic geography of that hairy visage, making widely known the huge head, the features scored with power and purpose, the lofty brow, the shaggy eyebrows, from beneath which the searching, deep-set, pale-blue eyes gazed sternly at his generation through gold-rimmed glasses that magnified its hideousnesses, the aggressive nose, and the tight-shut lipless mouth, the taciturn doorkeeper to his mind, that, downward drooping at the corners, betrayed the stubborn will which lurked behind its silences, pronouncing the resolute purposefulness that was the breath of the little stunted body that he was wont to clothe in ridiculous long black frock-coat reaching to near his heels, and wearing in the buttonhole of its large left lapel the ribbon of an order which this grim enemy of the state sported with childish pride.

The Man

When he stood up, the insignificance of his body compelled attention by its very insignificance; the forward thrust of the head, that marks the carriage of the short-sighted, still further dwarfing his inches, as he moved with slow, deliberate pace and almost stealthily, the hands locked behind his back. Yet the great lion-like head reclaimed dignity, and compelled attention.

Poet, prophet, anarchist, one of the most consummate playwrights of all time, none would have suspected him to be; but rather some sea-captain in his Sunday clothes, or sour minister of Calvin, perhaps a provincial doctor, or snuffy professor with dandruff on collar, who seeks to measure the immensities with a foot-rule, or count with elaborate mathematisings the grains of sand on Jupiter. Such, at first glance, was he who was none of these, yet, in truth, more than a little of them all—even if in hesitating fashion and doubtingly. Indeed, he was a very provincial in the

flesh; even whilst he hated parochial things, hating them with a parochial hate.

About his personal appearance Ibsen knew no conceit. In his poem, the children of his fancy take to their heels when, in the mirror, they see that unromantic figure in close-buttoned jacket and felt slippers, gazing at them with pale, short-sighted eyes.

Courteous, formal always with something of a stilted suburban formality, his small-talk was stiff and ill-sustained, as though he kept guard over his tongue behind the close-shut, secretive lips. The repulsive habit of churlishness he had not; and when he smiled, a wondrous sweetness came over the rugged face.

A man of few words, he spoke these in a slow drawl, with a grave sense of their serious import, as one who is under heavy responsibility in the doing.

It was said that he could be brusque and ill-mannered and cross-grained; and he looked

it; but it was likely enough that they who found him harsh and prickly and distant deserved his disdain. He could be morose enough to them that made him suffer. But the maker of life made anger for the using.

He would sit silent amongst many. When talking to the few he was not given to garrulousness. He would discuss, when he did talk, but ordinary topics. It has been said of him that "he talked like a wholesale tradesman."

He gave of his great treasure to a blind generation; and the people of his home land left him to starve his way to fame.

At thirty-six, with half his natural span gone behind him, at an age when most men are winning the prizes of life, in a state of penury, dependent on the charity of friends, fretting under the lack of recognition, galled by bitter attacks from the commonplace jacks-in-office of public opinion, disgusted with the dullard self-complacence of his stupid day, angered

and ashamed at the faint-heartedness of his countrymen who drank allegiance at banquets to their brothers of Denmark yet shrank from striking a blow when Germany assailed, he shook the dust of his country from off his feet, and went into exile. "With exile's staff and sorrow's pack," he set forth to conquer his age —for he had the conqueror's confidence, the conqueror's daring, the instincts of the world-compeller, this little stunted man with the lion's head.

A happy marriage was his only fortune.

His exile and his home-happiness gave him the sedate, jog-trot day for regular work— left him free to create the masterpieces of his genius.

He was trained in the grey school of adversity, and the hair-shirt of the purseless brotherhood was thrust upon him. For the best part of his long life he knew no home; his years were passed in the homelessness of unlovely lodgings at low rentals, in distant lands,

amongst alien peoples. He knew no bed but the hired bed of the stranger, until his hair was white.

Somewhat embarrassed in manner, his gruffness was a part of his embarrassment. His wonderful smile and warm handclasp betrayed a heart in the man that he took elaborate pains to hide from a world which was given to spitting at him.

At bottom, his was a candid and genial nature, hid under an armour of brusqueries.

But that face could take on a look of cruelty and fierce severity when he was stung to impatience or wrath or biting scorn or righteous indignation. And the world, plucking at his magnificence, railing at his honour, sneering at his powers, called to him to show that scowl and saw it, by consequence, nearly always.

Ibsen wrote best in the summer and the warmth.

The winter he gave to thinking out his plots

and planning his drama; to be wrought into a whole in the summer-time.

The subject decided upon, he thought it out carefully and long before he put it on paper—much of this thinking he did in long, solitary walks.

Having thought out the scheme in broad masses, he wrote the "first sketch."

After that, its elaboration proceeded at a great pace; this was his "first complete study."

He only now began to get on familiar terms with the characters; began to understand them thoroughly, to catch each character's personal habits and tricks of speech.

Then the whole was rewritten from beginning to end; this third issue was the "fair copy."

Only when it was perfectly finished in a "final copy," without blot or correction, did he send it to the publisher.

His play done, and sent away, always left Ibsen lonely—as though he had been robbed of intimate friends.

The Man

He got out of his art great pleasure.

Passionately fond of his work, he yet shrank from speaking of his books except to his intimates. He detested to see his own plays on the stage. The actors came between him and his conception of the characters, often distorting them for ever.

He corrected edition after edition of his books—no labour was too great that made for the perfecting of his life's work. He loved to see his art set in good type—to fondle the apparel of his thoughts when born.

A man of intense application, Ibsen's shortest poems often took him a month in the conception; the putting into writing was a speedy business.

Ibsen had a fine manly contempt for the literary snobbery of the type of dandified scribbler who is offended at the suggestion that he is supposed to "live by what he lives for"—his art. Methodical in all he did, in work as in rest from work, his day was reg-

ulated as by the tick of the clock. The wags at the café would guess the passing of the hour by the depth of the liquor in Ibsen's glass.

Rising at seven in summer, a little later in winter, he dawdled long over his dressing, walking about and brooding over his work whilst an hour and a half went by at his toilet.

Dressed, he had a morsel of bread and a small cup of coffee for breakfast. More than this was a hindrance to his work.

As the clock struck nine, he sat down to his desk, and wrought upon his play for four hours; not shutting himself into his room, but wandering in and out the nearest rooms, walking about and up and down between the spells of writing, smoking a short pipe. He never smoked except when at work.

He had to be alone to work.

At the stroke of one, he would stop, and go for a stroll before his mid-day meal to some favourite café, and, sipping his moderate glass, would sit and gaze at far-away Norway, or

brood upon the figures of the drama that his brain was hatching, or weigh the problems of life, weaving them into the web of his art, regardless of the bustle and the racket of the world that passed by.

After his mid-day meal he would read.

He had few books—indeed was never a devourer of books. He read little besides the newspapers—they gave him the passing events, and he wanted nothing more to whet his wits upon. The questions of the day, as by instinct, distilled their essence into his eager understanding.

For Turgueneff he had a vast admiration —Zola he had not read, and could not. A great Bible stood in his room always; he often read it from admiration of its style.

When planning a play, he carefully avoided reading any book that might engross him.

After a light supper, he was early to bed.

When at work upon a play, he ate as little as possible.

Ibsen

His writing-table was bare and orderly to austere stiffness. He is said to have kept upon it a number of little puppets, little wooden bears and painted devils, copper rabbits, cats and dogs, and the like, without which he could not work. A playwright would employ these to keep the grouping of his characters upon the stage before his eyes as he wrote—their exits and their entrances, and their relations to the "picture" before the footlights. But his friends, the witnesses, give each other the lie flatly about these dolls; it matters little either way. Ibsen was not above a pose.

Strong with the strength of health, he scarce knew a day's sickness; nor cold nor rain nor heat brought him discomfort.

The tittle-tattle of the gossips had it that he was given to the bottle. But Ibsen was a sipper, not a toper. He wore the vine leaves in his buttonhole, not in his hair. The vicious slander of his enemies, that he drank heavily, was a stupid scandal that expressed only what

they wished to believe. He was no teetotaler. The blue ribbon was not amongst his orders. He liked his glass; but drunkard he was not.

"I wish you knew my wife," said he; "she is the very wife for me."

He linked his life to a woman who was a keen admirer of his genius, and sympathised with his aims. She was, at times, and those, too, the blackest, the sole person who believed in him. For his son's future he set aside his own comfort and desires, and watched over his upbringing and his prospects with keen solicitude. Whether his aloofness from his own family were his fault or theirs, he early decided, with deep knowledge of the world, that kin did not mean kind; that one's chosen friends are dearer to us than brothers. And he had the courage to act upon the sanity—he left his kin to their own unkindnesses.

Ibsen saw life as the most sacred of all things. He saw that life was a thing to be

lived; not to be denied and starved and baulked.

He saw that under a state, society made laws which it thought, or pretended it thought, were for the public good; but that in reality these laws were often cowardly and contemptible tyrannies that ground down all originality and genius and freedom out of the individual, weakening his will, killing his initiative, making him a hypocrite from fear of vexing his fellows. He saw the state as the enemy of the individual.

The individual has the right to complete freedom—to live his own life full. It follows that, to be free, he must allow the like freedom to others. Therefore it is a part of freedom that he shall also do nothing that threatens the freedom of others.

Ibsen had utter contempt for any part of a man's creed or ideals which he did not try by his own life to realise. Indeed such part of a creed or ideal is a lie, a dead thing.

The Man

From his earliest youth he had a contempt for "thoughts unborn in acts."

From the moment he recognised his path in life, he set his face to it with dogged resolution, and stepped it with astounding courage.

He believed with constant faith that every man has a "call" in life—a mission. He saw life as it is lived to be a grey affair and a failure because of the cowardice and stupidity in which we steep and spoil a splendid thing. But he saw the value of life behind the sham.

And as he set himself to make his calling, so he set himself to make his soul.

He detested the cant of his nation's glib wine-talk at banquets about a "great cause," when it has neither the will nor the ability nor sense of duty to do "a great deed." He detested Norwegian "discretion" as only a lukewarmness of the blood that makes respectable souls "incapable of committing a sublime folly." And rather than sink into the colour of his people, he went into exile, to be free to

create himself. "There is something better worth having than a clever head," he said, "and that is a whole soul. I know of Italian mothers who took their boys of fourteen from school to send them with Garibaldi."

His belief in deeds makes the blood leap as at the bugle's call.

The severest and most difficult task that he set himself was the "being himself"; and he won success with a dignity as rare as his constancy and courage were profound.

"Nothing is impossible that one desires with an indomitable will." Ibsen's right to that battle-cry no man may put to the question.

He took the responsibility of himself with the arrogant pride of a mighty faith. "I, myself, am responsible for what I write—I and no other. I cannot bring trouble on my party—I belong to none. I stand, a solitary franctireur, at the outposts; and act on my own responsibility."

The Man

In the midst of attack, of lies, of calumnies and misjudgings, Ibsen stood firm, armed in a rare dignity. "Dignity is the only weapon against assaults." He looked straight ahead. He kept aloof from the fierce newspaper warfare that assailed each of his dramas as it came out. He had set up his aim in art; and to that he went, indifferent to all criticism, whether of blame or praise. He tried to avoid showing his enemies that what they said had the slightest effect upon him. He acted as though he could see no antagonists. In his early days, on reading an attack, he had thought himself ruined. But he consulted his dignity; did not bandy words with this one or the other; did not shout amidst the frantic din; set himself severely instead to the making of a new masterpiece. He saw that what was in the way, and to the right and left of him was "worm-eaten"; that it must collapse. He was between two epochs. "Anything was better than the existing state of affairs." The

future held the victory. The struggle was good, wholesome, invigorating, strength-giving.

He saw that he "would have the future with him."

"For storms a man must not alter his course —that were cowardice."

He set himself a lonely wayfaring; and even his stout courage came near to reeling at the loneliness on occasion.

"I look into myself; that is where I fight my battles, now conquering, now suffering defeats."

Yes, he suffered defeats.

He is for ever pulling up his soul by the roots to see how it is growing.

His life and work proclaimed the glory of the man who sacrifices everything to his own development. Yet the bitterness of his life lay in that he was taken at his word; he hungered always for the acclamation of the world.

It was an essential part of his Gethsemane

that he had to be "state-satirist" of the people whom he loved.

He saw that only through the individual himself, may a man overcome and set aside the limitations, the dulness, hypocrisies, lifelessness, weaknesses, that the tyranny of the state thrusts upon all alike; just as only by his own individual will may he overcome the curses that lie black upon him through heredity—that neither state nor laws can give a man his strength.

Like Bunyan of old, he saw the law as injustice—the church as the corrupter of religion—respectability as an hypocrisy. With Bunyan, he insisted on courage as the highest virtue—and kept the commandment.

It behooves one always to watch keenly for the real Ibsen behind the quaint husk of his outer man.

He was a mighty paradox, and given to uttering paradox.

He thinks in continents; he clothes his thoughts in suburbs.

Ibsen

He is an European, not a Norwegian. His whiskers and his taste in clothes belie him.

He confessed to being "not insensible to tokens of honour." But the "highest honour was to be understood."

He was not without self-contradictions.

An anarchist, and a persistent and bitter enemy of the state, which he attacked and vilified and scorned and abused, he did not hesitate to beg the state for money and favours and pensions; he was proud of the applause of princes; and his hunger for ribbons and orders won great-soul'd Byornsen's scorn.

He poured derision on written criticism, whilst exerting all his cajoleries to ensure the publishing of laudatory notices of himself with a zeal worthy of a shopman advertising his wares.

A great poet, a great playwright, it was as teacher, as moralist, that he chiefly won to fame—and he fretfully denied the claim.

His "message" was that the individual alone

mattered—that the individual had no laws to obey but self. But like his own uncompromising Brand, who to save his own soul trod down all, love of wife, love of child, love of his fellows, he found himself soon where Brand stood at last, amongst the frozen mountain-peaks. And he suspected that it was not good. Ibsen could lead his people from the old stagnant life of puritanical hypocrisy and the lies of respectability; but he built them instead no splendid habitation, not even a city of refuge. Outside was utter darkness, with fine phrases for only food.

Towards his age he was pessimistic. He was not wholly without optimism in a future that led—he knew not where!

It is a logical part of "the duty that is to the individual self alone," not only that society but that friendship has no claim upon one. And Ibsen did not shirk the consequence. He once sneered of Byornsen that "for him there exist

only two kinds of people—those from whom he can derive some benefit, and those who may be a hindrance to him"; and in the shabby charge, he laid bare his own soul.

No man used his friends to his own ends more than Henrik Ibsen. Men who helped him with open-handed generosity in youth, he never even wrote to—until he wanted to get some benefit therefrom.

"Friends," he wrote, "are a costly luxury—one cannot afford to have friends." And this is the man who was enabled to start his career solely through the friend of his youth, Schulerud, sharing his bread and his lodgings with him! This is the man who was enabled to pursue his calling, to get a pension from the state, to get a publisher for his work, through the self-sacrificing charity and the loyalty of his friends! This man used his friends unblushingly, for money, for place, for power. Without his friends he had died with his art unuttered—wholly unknown.

The Man

"Many friends and great influence—neither of them things to be despised," is the best he can say of friendship. Its value to him is its weight in dollars.

His sense of gratitude, and of the sublime debt of friendship, was never sufficient to keep his tongue from a harsh criticism.

Friendship, he feared, might rob him of time that he might be employing in brooding over his "intellectual germs." And, lest he risk the loss of one such "germ," he put from him that splendour of life that is in great comradeship. He paid an awful price for his individuality. But he paid it.

Yet from within that grim outer man, behind the words his mouth spoke, peeps at stirring moments a character passionately loyal and affectionate. He had a sensitive dread of wounding friends. "Warmth of heart is the first need where a true and vigorous spiritual life is to thrive." "I cannot write letters; I must be near in person and give myself wholly

and entirely." But friendship must be free. "I do not require the unanimity upon which friendship usually depends." There must be no taint of slavishness in it. "I can never bear to strip myself completely," he writes. "I am conscious, in personal intercourse, of being able to give only incorrect expression to what lies deepest in me and constitutes my real self; therefore I prefer to lock it up." And, "Only when alone with my thoughts am I myself."

Like the old sea-dogs of whom he came—and they left their mark upon his features and his soul—he was a stubborn fighter.

Peace he held as not the most desirable condition; the warfare of strenuous striving was the more healthy for man.

His eyes were the watchful eyes of the sailor folk, at constant guard for the threat of danger that may leap forth on every hand—out of the summer sky above, or the calm waters beneath, or from out the seething hell of the

black, bewildering tempest—ever ready for war with the elements without. So did he keep ward against the elements of weaknesses within. And, as with them, was his grim visage furrowed with the scars of strife.

He developed his great powers late; but his very first drama was a challenge—a trumpet-call to war.

He knew what his nation risked from loss of habit in the courage for war.

In spite of his high achievement in the drama, this man's life was one long, sombre tragedy. He appointed himself the surgeon of his Age; cut recklessly with wilful knife into the quivering flesh of his time, and discovered its diseases to a gaping world; but when it came to the cure, bewildered, he let the blood-besprent knife drop from his fingers, unskilled to heal the body that he had slashed to rid it of its pestilence.

He was like one who raises a people to revolt, and cannot lead them when revolted.

Ibsen

He strove for a new world to conquer, before he had discovered it. He was so vague in what he wanted that he called himself a socialist, who was an anarchist detesting the state—he who hated so well his fellow-men that he called aloud for the second coming of the Deluge, so that when the waters were risen he might put a torpedo under the ark—ready to perish himself rather than that his fellows should live.

He often thought clumsily.

He had the iron will but the doubting heart. He set up the worship of self—and came to doubt even that.

Towards his generation he was pessimistic; and the pessimist sees only that part of life which is death. He could see only half-things. He eagerly seized upon heredity as the maker of life—yet he learnt his lesson with short-sighted eyes, since he saw ever the evils that heredity breeds, never the good. That heredity selected and created the master-peoples

was beyond his vision; he could see only that it destroyed the decaying, or ground them into the slave-folk. Ibsen had not the seeing eye for what is strong. He brooded upon the drama of life as it went by, and judged it by the villain of the play, not by the hero. He sat him down at a window in a back-alley of the world and judged the procession of halt and maimed and blind, the shabby and the hypocrite and the eccentric, to be the whole pageant of life.

Bitterly disliked and unpopular in his own country for the best part of his life, he lived to see himself its chief source of pride—boasted of as a national possession that gave Norway her best title to fame—his dramas the glory of Scandinavian literature—the publication of a new play from his hands an European event.

He spent the greater part of his life in exile, flinging stones at the windows of society; he returned in his old age to be rapturously welcomed by the folk whose windows he had shattered.

Ibsen

He deliberately chose to work out his destiny, to become master of himself, far from his people, undisturbed by the racket of the parish pump, deaf to the din of their narrow day. A poet, said he, is by nature long-sighted. And he found that he was nearest to his people, saw them with clearest eyes, and judged them best, in the true perspective of a serene distance. But it was upon his people that his eyes were bent, his heart was set; and when the years had made his hair white and his feet to drag, he won home to his people.

The year of the north is one long day and one long night. Out of the bright, jocund day of Norway, amidst scent of flowers and the blithe singing of birds, was born the great-soul'd Byornsen, vikingesque, of mighty heart, a virile giant, vigorous, trumpet-tongued, believing in his fellow-men. Out of the long black night of her winter came forth Henrik Ibsen, blinking owl-like; out of the solemn gloom he came, a brooding figure, tragic, un-

afraid; within his stern will a rending energy lurked, that, when he gave it tongue, cracked and rent the ground of untruth on which the generations had trod. Probing into the dark places of the human soul, he plucked the cloak from "respectability," and showed the drab and shabby make-believe that lurked within; and, in the doing, proved himself the supreme satirist and playwright of his age.

PEDIGREE OF HENRIK IBSEN

CANUTTE (KNUD) HENRIKSEN IBSEN, the only son, a merchant of Skien.
HENRIK IBSEN, the only son, a sea-captain, drowned at sea.
HENRIK PETERSEN IBSEN, a sea-captain settled at Skien.
A German lady.
WENCHE DISCHINGTON, who married secondly PROVOST VON DER LIPPE, of Skien.
PETER IBSEN, a Danish sea-captain, settled in Norway 1720, admitted to freedom of Bergen.
A German lady.
DISCHINGTON, a Scotchman, settled in Norway.
A Scotch lady.
PLESNER, a German.
A German wife.
PLESNER, a pious, reserved, and taciturn woman, of keen intellect. Married secondly to OLE PAUS, a sea-captain, by whom she had four children.
A German.
A German lady.
A German wife.
MARIA CORNELIA ALTENBURG, daughter of a wealthy German merchant of Skien.
ALTENBURG, a wealthy German merchant of Skien, who had begun life as a sea-captain.
ALTENBURG, a German.
A German wife.
A German.
A German lady.
A German wife.
PAUS, sister to OLE PAUS.
PAUS, a German.
A German wife.
A German.
A German lady.
A German wife.

HENRIK IBSEN,
the poet and playwright, and eldest son.

HIS CAREER

HIS CAREER

"The important thing is, not to be blindly admired, but to be understood."—Ibsen

I.

IN NORWAY, on the 20th day of the March of 1828, in the southern seaport town of Skien, there was born to the rich and spendthrift, though duly pious, merchant, Knud Ibsen, and his well-born German wife, their first child, a quaint, large-headed mite whom they christened Henrik Ibsen. The gossips little guessed that this strange child was to make their town world-famous—though there were few things chanced within their parish that the gossips of Skien did not know, or guess at; which is to say that all Skien did not know, and swear to, before the clocks struck midnight.

Henrik Ibsen was, as to a sixteenth part of him, Danish, through a great-great-grand-

father, one Peter Ibsen, a sea-captain who had settled in Norway about 1720—another sixteenth part or more was Scotch, through a great-grandmother Dischington—as to the rest and chiefest part of him he was thoroughly German. Of Norwegian blood or name he had none!

Thus in his beginnings was Norway's greatest poet.

Both his parents were of the patrician families of Skien. His father's half-brother, Chief-Magistrate Paus, for many years a member of the Storthing, and Judge Paus were also first cousins to his mother. Indeed, both father and mother were close kin to the families of Plesner, von der Lippe, Cappelen, and Blom, that dominated the neighbourhood.

Hats were doffed low in Skien when an Ibsen passed along the street; and 'tis by the length and splendour of such courtesies that you shall judge of a man's magnificence in the southern seaport town of Skien.

The father, our worthy merchant, Knud Ibsen, was a wealthy man, and given to wide and reckless hospitality. The mother, Maria Cornelia Altenburg, the daughter of a wealthy merchant of German blood, was a reserved woman, silent, amiable, self-sacrificing, self-obliterating.

II.

In the heart of the busy little seaport, amidst its homely wooden houses and its three thousand souls, lived the merchant, Knud Ibsen.

His home, the Stockmann house, was on the market-place, opposite the flight of steps that ran up to the high-tower'd church which stood in the centre of the square—the town pillory was chief emblem to one side of the square, the town-hall with its prison and madhouse to the other; on the fourth side stood the school.

This square, without green, without open

landscape beyond, was the child Henrik Ibsen's earliest picture of the world—a square filled with the roar and rush of hissing waters from two cataracts, and the scream and cry of hundreds of saw-mills, that wailed like the wailing of women.

Several wealthy and cultured families lived in the town and neighbourhood, closely kin by marriage.

Dances, dinners, and musical parties kept the social life agog, summer and winter. There being no inns, the rich kept open house for such as visited the town. Knud Ibsen's roomy mansion was ever full of guests.

Our southern seaport town of Skien had an "aristocracy" of officials and wealthy old families—the rest were "plebeians." Between the two castes was an icy barrier, an impassable gulf—indeed the pieties ran to severities.

Neither wealth nor capacity could break into the circle of the "aristocracy"; yet, to be of the fold had its conditions, for if fortune

deserted one within, the forbidding door was shut upon the hapless one and he passed out from amongst them. Skien was pitiless as it was righteous—and the town was a hot-bed of piety.

The family of Ibsen was of this "aristocracy," and the centre of it.

So the little fellow lived in affluence, a quiet child, who took no part in the squabbles and fights of the boys in the square—had the rather a taste that made him look forward to the fairs when jugglers and tight-rope dancers and horse-riders came to the place—and to the burning of bonfires on St. John's Eve.

III.

But a black day was to come, when hats were no longer doffed low when an Ibsen passed along the street.

When the boy was eight, his father went bankrupt.

The family had to retire to a little country

property near the town; the circle to which they belonged piously proceeded to drop them; and at once the family of Ibsen realised, as under dog, the uncompassionate bowels that are in respectability and the stern suburban sense of caste that governs poor and democratic Norway. The sensitive child felt it with uncanny keenness; the poverty was now as mean as the wealth before had been lavish. Young as he was, the child knew that he was now of the outcasts.

Singularly grave and serious, the boy never played like other children. Whilst the little brothers and sisters romped, he would bolt himself into a little room, even in the severe cold of winter, and pore over old books. He had no liking for athletic doings, and "violence was not in him."

Fond of drawing, he was much given to painting figures in gaudy costumes on cardboard, which he cut out and fixed to little wooden stands.

The little fellow went in to Skien to school, where he learnt a smattering of Latin and regular habits of work. History and religion were his strong subjects, and he displayed an uncommon gift for drawing; the masters overlooked the boy—but amongst his fellows he was known for keenness of brain, a quick, irritable tongue, a satirical humour, and a friendly and companionable nature.

When the boy was fourteen his family returned to Skien; and it was soon put to the lad that he must earn his bread. His wish was to become an artist; but of choice of career he had none. Low tastes were severely dealt with; and it was decided to apprentice him to an apothecary.

IV.

At sixteen the lad left his home to become apprentice to one Reimann, an apothecary at the little seaport of Grimstad—never again to return, except for two or three short visits as a budding apothecary.

Ibsen

He left his home with a lean purse. But he carried with him an imagination steeped in bitter experience. He bore in his dingy pack a horror of the means employed by society against such as are at war with its ordering—the prison, the gallows, the madhouse, and public opinion he saw to be brutalities. The war of wealth against poverty had left its scars upon him. The different justice meted out by the pious and the sober and respectable to rich and poor had been his. It had driven him into himself, and made him retire behind a barrier of taciturn gravity.

In this narrow little seaport of Grimstad, the intellect of the place was given up to "the ship" and its cargo—the great world that swung beyond the harbour meant little to the worthy citizens. Here hurry was a disease. Time ticked slowly. Custom was lord of the place. An act against custom was an "excess"—originality an "eccentricity"—eccentricity a crime.

Youth

The apothecary's shop was the centre of gossip; and the little local comedies of life passed, unwitting of their meannesses, before the keen, spectacled eyes of an apprentice, who mixed powder and pill and potion with more than a drachm of sour disdain.

Amongst these eight hundred sober folk of the little seaport Ibsen spent all the years of his youth—a thing apart, and a stranger to the place. The suburban upper class, of ship-owners, merchants, and sea-captains, shut its doors upon the apothecary's apprentice and all such "common people."

Early penury is apt to scar the mind. The lean youth had the imaginative gift to create a kingdom of his own; but the slights that come to poverty rankled.

He set himself high ambitions and resolved bold plans for his life, far too great to unfold to the jeers and giggles of his narrow world. These high aims he saw that he would never achieve as an apothecary; he must at least

climb out of the apothecary's shop to the higher social position of a physician. With dogged effort, he bent his steps through hard self-instruction towards the University of Copenhagen. But the poetic gift was stirring within him and would not be stayed. He early broke into song.

The year of 1848 set revolution aflame across Europe; and there was one lad, in far Grimstad by the sea, whose ears were quick to catch the hoarse note of revolt.

In his narrow lodging, by candle-light, he dipped his pen in the blood of martyrs, glorying in their splendour.

That a young man in so modest a rank of life, a greenhorn of an apothecary's drudge, should dare to think such thoughts; worse still, utter them in verse; nay, worse still, presume to speak them with vehemence in the presence of his betters, and across worthy Reimann's counter, soon made him conspicuous in his little parish.

Youth

He was greeted with wrath and mockery and the galling laughter of dullards. The young fellow, as often happens with the shy and reserved, was the last man to beat a retreat. He got a-tilting at the little community; and with epigram and caricature he attacked many even of those whose friendship he valued.

The storm in the teacup was but the dress-rehearsal for the mighty storm that was to gather about him with an European thunder in his tempestuous after-career.

As Ibsen approached manhood he won the friendship of one or two young fellows who were of the dominant families of the place; though he never entered the charmed circle. He seems to have shared in some devilries with them that were looked upon as "mad and riotous" and beneath the habits of well-behaved youth.

But his youth was thinking, not uttering itself in speech, though he might burst out on occasion into reckless talk.

Ibsen

The young women of Grimstad seem to have been afraid of the grave and gloomy young apothecary—indeed he was scarcely the country damsel's ideal. This youth who stood brooding at a dance, harassed by the sorrow which lurked beneath all the pleasure of the whirling couples, scarcely added to the gaiety of the evening.

One night, at a ball, he sees a pair of beautiful eyes—he dances with the girl—enters into the seventh heaven—only to learn that she is betrothed. But she has taught him "to long, to hope, and to be disappointed." She goes out of his life, to become an exquisite memory, before the rapture is sullied by too long acquaintance with it.

The cub, we shall see, is father to the lion.

In conflict with society, in an intellectual desert, the life he was living was become well-nigh intolerable, when there came to him, as out of the heavens, that which brought to birth the genius that was in him.

In reading for the university, he had to take up Sallust's account of, and Cicero's Orations on, the Catiline conspiracy.

During the winter of 1848, on the eve of his twenty-first year, in secret, sitting up at night to do it, he created his first play, a three-act tragedy in blank verse, *Catilina*.

Ibsen's quick imagination created out of the desperate anarchist of ancient Rome a kindred soul to his own youth—not the unbridled libertine, the unscrupulous fortune-hunter, the state-pirate of reckless ambition that Sallust and Cicero drew; but an heroic Catiline, a majestic and vigorous soul, burning with enthusiasm for the great heroic past, horrified at the rottenness of his age, raising a revolt against the corrupt state, but too steeped in that rottenness himself to be able to save the age.

Catiline detests and despises Roman society, where self-seeking and intrigue and cunning hold sway.

Here we have Ibsen himself, who sees that

man ought to be a free individual, free to develop the best that is in him, strength of will and courage—sees that society, protecting itself as a state, is not developing the free man of will and courage, but is using all its giant strength to prevent men from being strong and free, is in fact grinding all men down to the level of what, with dull eyes, it thinks men should be in order to make the state a comfortable place for the weaker wills to live in.

Catiline realises at last that he is alone—and that, alone, he must rise against society.

So too, Ibsen. But there comes the awful dread. Is he not, like Catiline, too steeped himself in the hypocrisies and make-believes of society to shake them off and rise unhampered by them? How shall a tainted man save the tainted state?

Catiline fails; partly through the treachery and cowardice of his comrades who are but fighting for selfish ends; partly because he is the slave to fierce passions, living a life of the

wildest debauchery that is in the fashion. The lack of purity of character and firmness of will, qualities of absolute need to a man of great aims, wrecks him.

He sees that his companions are needy jackals who seek but plunder; he sees that with such curs he cannot restore the ancient Rome of his ideals; he decides therefore that Rome shall wholly perish.

But these cowards have not even the force of character to set Rome on fire!

Catiline is torn between love for the terrible vestal virgin Furia and his tender wife Aurelia, who sacrifices all for him, devotes herself wholly to him. It is not Aurelia, his better self, but the vestal virgin, Furia, who has the greater influence over him, who fires him to deeds. But though she loves him, she is a slave to the revenge that she harbours against him for his seduction of her sister Silvia. She is hemmed in by the laws of society, she is fettered in her act of will by being tied to the

temple; she will slay him, that their souls may go out together into the shades. So she brings about his death.

Catilina is a marvellous work for youth. Here, dimly shadowed forth in its rough beginnings, is Ibsen's genius. Here we have the gulf that is between our aims and our powers to fulfil them—the gulf between the will and the achievement—between the individual and the state.

In this his first play, we see a certain type of character in a certain relation to others, which he repeated again and again. The devil-may-care hero, strong, fearless, ambitious, self-reliant, gifted, fascinating to women, of overwhelming personality—with his life-problem flung between two women, one fierce and gifted and of heroic will, the other gentle, sweet, tender and lovable; the fierce, wilful woman, most cruel to the man she loves; as foil to the hero, a weak, or less heroic man, of second-rate will and power, who develops

from the weakling of his early plays into an honourable, gentlemanly, estimable, prosaic person, only a second-rate man enough and sufficiently commonplace to make the hero stand out as near to demigod.

However confused Ibsen's aims be at times, one thing stands out clear always—strength of will and the courage to pursue it are the noblest qualities in man.

This with his contempt for, and his pessimistic conception of, his age, led him by instinct into the ways of tragedy. Tragedy alone could give him the majestic struggle, the thrilling situation, the terrible opposition whereby strength of will might prove itself. It is the essence of tragedy that "great strength is wasted to no purpose."

And we shall see that Ibsen is always bent upon the struggle of a strong soul against the dull-eyed but gigantic strength of the state.

"Everything which I have created as a poet," he wrote in after years, "has had its

SPENT?

origin in a frame of mind and a situation in life. I never wrote because I had, as they say, *found a good subject.*"

Amongst his Grimstad friends were two youths to whom at last he confided his poetic ambitions—Christopher Lorentz Due, of the custom-house, and Ole Schulerud, a law-student.

Due made a fair copy of *Catilina*, which Schulerud took with him in the autumn of 1849 to Christiania, and offered without success to the theatre there, and to the publishers.

There is something pathetic in the youth Ibsen's feverish anxiety to get this play published. From his dingy lodging in the little seaport his eyes are bent with such feverish longing on the capital. He writes scolding letters to our honest, generous Schulerud; apologises for them; begs forgiveness by return of post; begs that his letters may be burnt.

Ah! there is so much in that publication! Almost as comic is it to read of his thankfulness for "trouser material," sent as gift by this same big-hearted Schulerud, who, from all accounts, is not over-blessed as to coverings to keep his own nether-man from the bleak winter.

Yet Ibsen was not wholly discouraged, for we find him, in this winter of '49, writing the first act of a new play which was never finished—and he has nearly re-written a little one-act play *The Hero's Mound* (or *Grave*), which we shall see acted in the Christiania theatre before a twelvemonth is out; to say nothing of being well advanced with a longer poem, *Ball-Room Memories*, inspired by the infatuation of the past summer; besides a chapter or so of a national historical novel, no less, but never further pursued than this.

If the youth's wildnesses were more than "whistlings on the Sabbath," he must, between work and wild living, have found small time

for sleep this winter. Village tongues will wag.

But there seems to have been urgency of need for the "trouser material." Nay, poor youth, he is about to set forth on a journey whereon he will lack more serious things even than trouser material—bread and bed and ease of mind. But he has big worlds to conquer, this quaint-looking stripling, and the right will for the stormy wayfaring that is called the artistic career.

Meanwhile, faithful Schulerud, baffled by the theatres and publishers, lent Ibsen the money out of his small hoard; and *Catilina* went to press, at his own risk.

Ibsen was twenty-one when he spent his last night at Grimstad. From the year he reached manhood he never wrote to his parents. He could not help them. He was "half a stranger to them." He had rid himself of all the strict Biblical piety that reigned

in his father's house; and the freedom of thought, that was the very best of his life, was an unholy thing to that house.

With his family he had no open breach. From the day he left his home he drifted away from an atmosphere in which he could not breathe; just as, later, he drifted away from his country.

"I have entirely separated myself from my own parents, from my whole family, because a position of half-understanding was unbearable to me."

The one close tie with his home was his sister Hedvig, the model, in the years to come, for his exquisite girl-child in *The Wild Duck.* It was to this sister that, in his twentieth year, he said that his life-ambition was to reach "the highest, most perfect attainable pitch of greatness and understanding," and then to die.

V.

Ibsen, leaving the apothecary's shop behind him, set out for the capital, almost penniless, a month before his play was published; and had settled down in Christiania in sad need, to prepare for his matriculation examination the tragedy of *Catilina*, by Brynjolf Bjarme, into the university, when, in the April of 1850, appeared in book form. Only thirty copies were sold. The world did not discover that one of her greatest poets hid himself behind the uncouth mantle of Brynjolf Bjarme.

Ibsen was now twenty-two.

Fortune, that was to have come to him out of the printed book, hung back shyly.

Luckily for Ibsen, his generous friend Schulerud had a small monthly allowance, which he now shared with him together with his rooms, for Ibsen was in a pitiful state of penury.

On coming to Christiania in the March of 1850, Ibsen went to Heltberg, a "crammer" for

the university. Older and poorer than the others, Ibsen had to hurry forward towards the entrance examination which, in the summer, he passed in part, failing in Greek and mathematics.

At Heltberg's he made friends amongst the students who were destined to play a large part in his life.

One of these was Vinje, "the Peasant," who had been a schoolmaster. Ten years older than Ibsen, his bitter scepticism trampled all the conventional ideals of society under foot and poured contempt and ridicule on all the aims of the age. Ibsen and Vinje had fought their way to the strength of reason through scepticism; they had now to fight the weakness that is in scepticism itself. They had to rid themselves of the unproductiveness that is bred of mere doubt. They both freed themselves by plunging into warfare for an ideal. But they were to drift apart—Vinje giving his trenchant wit and biting irony to the pedantry of

language reform, whilst Ibsen flung himself into the "Scandinavian movement" to unite the three kingdoms. Vinje we shall see loom immortal as the original of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt.*

Another student who made a deep impression on Ibsen was Paul Botten-Hansen, a youth of peasant blood, who, better educated than Vinje, a booklover and an original thinker of independence, whilst a sceptic of satiric gifts, had talents of more humourous and gentler quality. To his fine sense of style Ibsen owed a heavy debt.

Ibsen met also a student who was to exert a more profound impression upon his life, a younger man, of overwhelming personality, Byornsterne Byornsen, who describes Ibsen at this time as: "Tense and lean, the colour of gypsum, behind a vast black beard—Henrik Ibsen."

Even in the midst of the strain of work for entrance to the university, Ibsen found time

to polish and complete the one-act play, *The Hero's Mound.* It was accepted by the Christiania theatre. In metre, phrasing and subject it shows no originality, and betrays pupillage. Goodness is the ideal, not strength.

On the performance of *The Hero's Mound* (The Warrior's Barrow) in September, Ibsen gave up all idea of the university and devoted himself to literature.

With his generous friend Schulerud, the law student, he was now at work in modest rooms. The price of his play added little to his friend's narrow monthly allowance, which was generously and devotedly shared with him. It did not run to dinner often; so that they had to sally out during the dinner-hour to trick the people with whom they lodged into the belief that they had dined out—contenting themselves on their return with coffee and bread, their cheeriness and heartiness deceiving even their most intimate comrades. To Ibsen, not the least part of this faithful and self-sacri-

ficing friendship was the incalculable service that Schulerud rendered him by his steadfast belief in his genius.

A friend who greatly influenced Ibsen at this time was a student, Theodor Abildgaard, who shared the rooms with him and Schulerud, a youth deeply involved in, and soon a leader of the working-men's movement under Marcus Thrane.

The labour movement made a hot appeal to Ibsen, boldly attacking as it did the very foundations of the smug society that he detested. Introduced by Abildgaard to Thrane and other leaders, he took part in their meetings and demonstrations, and more than once wrote for them.

Wretchedly poor, his eyes were compelled to the sordid side of life. His struggle for bare existence embittered his intellectual struggles and tinged with asperity, and a harshness near to ferocity, his passionate desire to utter in poetry the revolt that was in him.

From the new year (1851) he was editing with Botten-Hansen and Vinje a weekly paper of literary aims, for which he wrote lyrics and satirical pieces bitterly attacking the radical Opposition for its weaknesses in opposing; it ran into the autumn, never having more than a hundred subscribers.

In this his twenty-second year, he roughed out in heroic ballad-verse a play, *Olaf Liliekrans*, which he did not finish till six years afterwards.

In July, Thrane and Abildgaard were arrested; but Ibsen's fear of arrest was not realised owing to the astute presence of mind of one of the conspirators, who tossed all the treasonable papers out upon the floor under the eyes of the police, making a show of hiding harmless documents which were at once pounced upon instead, thus allowing the destruction, amongst other things, of Ibsen's letters to Abildgaard.

Ibsen helped for a while to put into literary form the thoughts of the new editor, Bern-

hard Hansen, a journeyman mason; but Hansen was also soon afterwards arrested.

Ibsen was in dire straits when, in November, the famous violin-player, Ole Bull, struck by his personality, had him appointed as manager to the National Theatre at Bergen.

Though Ibsen never again took sides or active part in the working-men's movement, it kept his sympathy.

VI.

In the November of his twenty-third year, Ibsen left Christiania for Bergen to take up the post of playwright and stage manager to the new Norwegian Theatre at sixty-seven pounds a year.

When Ibsen left for Bergen, he knew Byornsen but slightly. The two men, however, were now taking paths that were bound to meet—they were seizing from the old sagas whatsoever they held of the national genius. They were brooding upon the same "Kingship

thought," keenly striving to untie the knot as to who was to be the real ruler of Norway. And it was in this poetical enthusiasm and ferment to set the reality of kingship before the people that Ibsen raised from out the silence all his mighty genius, and freed his great powers for their flight. The kings of men were not they who lived upon or revived the old, but the men who could lead into the future, the "lucky-happy" men who felt the thoughts of the age and had the passionate belief in them that strives to realise them in acts.

In the April following his arrival at Bergen, Ibsen was offered a three months' tour in Denmark and Germany to study stage-methods and plays.

He pledged himself in return to hold the Bergen post for five years; willingly doing so, for the pay, though meagre, was a fixed income, and he got a thorough experience of the drama.

Ibsen

The younger Dumas held that a playwright is born, not made. Dumas spoke a half-truth; Ibsen saw that technical skill, whilst it may be overrated, is an absolute essential. His early and thorough training in stage-management, ten years' experience in producing a hundred plays, stood him in good stead.

At twenty-four, he went to Copenhagen, and set foot in Germany for the first time.

The drama both at Copenhagen and Dresden was under the academic influence of the time; but it was being assailed by the new art of Realism. In Copenhagen the battle-cry of the younger men was Nature—in Dresden it was Passion. But both were at one in their attack on the old declamatory methods. Ibsen saw the old and the new side by side, and was deeply impressed by the new movement.

During this journey he wrote a three-act play—*St. John's Night*—a jumble of realism and romanticism. It was a dire failure.

Stage Management

Ibsen's next play shows at once the lessons he had learnt from his experience of the stage. He rejects the loosely knit "chronicle-style" of the historical play introduced by Shakespeare, and devotes himself to strict construction, whilst he also realises that an historical drama must not be mere history, but a "tragedy of characters," in order to become a serious work of art.

In the winter of his twenty-sixth year he wrote in prose the historical tragedy in three acts, *Lady Inger of Ostraat*, the result of a love-affair, hastily entered into, and violently broken off.

The Lady Inger, a queenly woman of great gifts, one chosen by destiny to free her people from the tyrant, is impelled by every noble consideration to strike for her people—she has but to act to conquer. But—she cannot, dare not, act. Her illegitimate son, the son of a secret passion, is held as hostage by her enemies.

Baffled all her life by this hold that her enemies have upon her, she suddenly thinks she has got into her power the man whose death would save the youth and secure him the Norwegian crown. She acts at last. She has him slain—only to discover that it is her own son.

In Lady Inger's desperate conflict between her love for her son and her love for the people, Ibsen created a character of tragic grandeur—the conflict is very tragedy.

In the fascinating Danish Knight, Nils Lykke, the ambitious man of the world, the brilliant master of intrigue, the irresistible conquerer of women, Ibsen never touches a false note.

The play contains one of the most exquisite love-scenes in modern drama—that between Nils Lykke and Eline. The growth of the love in this proud girl's heart for the man whom, without knowing it, she fiercely desires to hate, is written with rare beauty and reticence, and a wondrous convincingness. In

Eline, Ibsen's first fascinating woman steps on to the stage.

Ibsen reveals himself a consummate master of stage-craft.

At twenty-six, the French drama has yielded to him all its secrets.

Here we have a "tragedy of character," written with such skill, the moment chosen with such consummate insight, that the unities of time and place are wrought into one single night and one background.

The plot develops with astounding dramatic force; the interest never wavers. The sense of tragedy increases, scene by scene, to its culmination.

The drama was played at Bergen in the new year; and was printed a couple of years later.

Ibsen is now done with masters and schooling. He scales the heights of the sublime. He essays the great dramatic flight; and his wings can sustain the flight.

In 1855, after a long confinement, Ibsen's friend Abildgaard was sentenced to five years' imprisonment with hard labour.

A personal experience of Ibsen's, with the sixteen-year old girl with "two brown eyes," set the poetry in him jigging to the blithe and most cheerful of his plays, and he tuned his mood to lyrical measure, writing in the summer of this year *The Feasting at Solhoug* (the Sunhills).

Ibsen was at this time much in love with the ballad form, as against the epic form of the saga.

Behind this play lay a personal experience that made a profound impression upon Ibsen. We shall see him repeating the situation several times. Gudmund, the minstrel, is torn between the passionate woman Margit and the gentle girl Signe—here also we have the hero's weaker foil, Bengt. The young woman Margit, little more than girl, fascinating the hero in his youth, after she has gone through

a disappointing marriage with the stupid Bengt still loves the lover of her youth—a passionate woman, tempted to sin, and tempting her lover to it. On the other hand is the tender, loving Signe.

Put upon the stage at Bergen at the beginning of the new year, *The Feasting at Solhoug* was at once a pronounced success and played to a crowded house. Received with vehement applause, Ibsen and the actors were called before the curtain time and again; and late in the evening, the orchestra, followed by a large crowd, played a serenade under the young playwright's window. Ibsen was thrilled with pleasure. The play made his name known to a wide circle of playgoers for the first time, being produced soon afterwards at Christiania, at Stockholm, and at Copenhagen.

Its success compelled the attention of the critics, who attacked it; and Ibsen had to suffer the distress of all original minds—the

charge of imitation, fatuous as it nearly always is.

Byornsen, with wonted and generous enthusiasm, thrust into the eyes of the public the fact that a new genius had dawned in dramatic literature.

In the spring of this year of 1856 he wrote his poem *To the Only One*, a daughter of Dean Thoressen of Bergen, and step-daughter of the authoress Magdalen Thoressen—their engagement followed.

Ibsen next completed his play in three acts, *Olaf Liliekrans*, begun in his early Christiania days. Ibsen himself was ill-satisfied with this, his last play produced during his five years' apprenticeship to the stage at Bergen.

In it he ended his short romantic devotion to the ballad, which had soon yielded to him all it had to give; he was about to turn to the saga.

In the summer of 1857, being on the edge of thirty, he was appointed "artistic director" of

the Norwegian Theatre in Christiania, at about a hundred and thirty-five pounds a year; and Byornsen left for Bergen to succeed him as manager of the theatre there.

For seven years Christiania was to be the scene of Ibsen's struggles to become a great dramatic poet. He came up with all the eager, jigging hopes and ambitions and enthusiasms of thirty. But the seven years were to be burdened with heavy cares. His lack of money was terrible; he had left Bergen in debt; in Christiania he contracted more debts.

He brought with him from Bergen the beginnings of a new drama.

He had turned from the ballad to the saga. Ibsen was a rare artist and had all an artist's taste for casting an idea in the form that best suited its perfect utterance.

He was not clear as to the style in which the drama of legend should be cast. He felt that national subjects could be treated only in a national form of art. Now the sagas were, in

their essence, pagan; his eyes turned to the Greek drama. This new play, *The Vikings at Helgeland*, he began in verse form, intending to carry it out on the Greek model; but he soon began to doubt whether in prose it might not be "more poetical than in verse." He at once found that he could retain the old Scandinavian conciseness and abruptness of phrasing; and that it fitted the form of his poetical aim. The result was astounding in its dramatic power. The action being rid of lyric outbursts and of all unnecessary incident and detail, the dialogue never bursts into high top-notes or declamatory "bits"; yet the phrasing glows with passion. Sharp wit and biting retort there are; but always in place. It is a real struggle for life or death that we look upon. Love and hate, comradeship and revenge, scorn and agony, are there, concentrated and vehement and compelling and naked as in the saga itself; and the language, sonorous and simple, convincingly conveys the elemental

spirit and rude essence of the old-world tragedy with modern vividness. It is a superb achievement.

The Vikings at Helgeland is the tragedy of the man who has taken the credit of another man's act—thieved another's achievement.

The strong, passionate, heroic woman, Hjordis, whose father has been killed in a viking raid, has lived from girlhood in the conqueror's home. Sigurd and his friend Gunnar come and fall in love with her; and she, secretly loving the fearless Sigurd, promises herself to him who kills the bear. Sigurd, disguised in Gunnar's armour, wins the maid for his friend.

The tragedy begins when Gunnar, committed to the secret, has to suffer the torment of listening to the praises of his deed, which he has not only not performed, but was incapable of performing. His honour becomes a ghastly burden. The listening to laudations of himself before Sigurd is worse than the most bitter contempt.

The tragedy increases when, as Gunnar's wife, Hjordis learns that the man she loves has really won her. There is a limit to self-sacrifice, she proudly tells him—and no man may give his friend the woman he loves. Here again we have Ibsen's type-hero, the romantic, strong, generous Sigurd, torn between the daring Hjordis and the gentle Dagny, his loving wife—with, as foil, the brave, honest, but less heroic Gunnar. Here again Hjordis is most cruel to him whom she most loves, slaying him that they may go out together upon the winds.

Thus Ibsen sought, through the sublime horror of the wild tragedy of ancient days, to shame and awe his generation by thrusting into its eyes the greatness of its forefathers—passion that with swift, ruthless strides pushes on to its aim; pride of strength that is too vigorous for idle words, that acts quickly and in silence, suffers in silence, dies in silence—when wills were of steel, and hearts of gold; so that their deeds have lived down the centuries.

The Vikings Ibsen wrote whilst he was engaged to be married.

The play in four acts was completed in the autumn of his twenty-ninth year.

Now, the Norwegian Theatre at Christiania had been established as a protest against the servitude of the old theatre to the Danish drama. Ibsen did not feel his own players to be strong enough to play the tragedy, and offered it to the old theatre. It was refused on the plea of lack of funds; but as the actors had just been granted a considerable rise in salary, Ibsen rushed to the attack in print. His allies, Byornsen and Botten-Hansen, launched into the fray. The paper warfare became very bitter.

Ibsen was obliged to fall back upon publishing the play in book form. It was coldly received.

It is almost incredible that this sublime play, Ibsen's first great masterpiece, should have failed to arouse public recognition. It sounded

a mighty note, hitherto unheard in the literature of his race. The vision of the thing is wide; its range an eagle's flight; its prose prodigious in emotional force. At a stride the man of thirty is in the company of the world's genius.

VII.

When Ibsen returned to Christiania, his friend Botten-Hansen was the centre of a circle of brilliant men who, during the 'fifties and 'sixties, were known as "the Dutchmen."

Ibsen was now wont to meet, amongst others, his old friend Vinje, who was developing very irregular habits. Antagonisms broke up the circle in the 'seventies and 'eighties. But Ibsen kept outside their bickerings; he was a "solitary," siding with neither party, but claimed by each in turn.

His friendship amongst the "Dutchmen" did him yeoman service on many an occasion when the days were black—and through his after life.

He was brought into touch with the whole wide intellectual movement of his day—though he came afterwards to half-believe his own theory that his touch with modern thought was "instinct." We have all our pose —from king to guttersnipe.

His great helper was Botten-Hansen. He was a literary force. From his student days to 1866 he conducted a weekly illustrated paper in which his criticisms of authors came to be held in wide repute. Ibsen asked for, and received, heavy literary support from him—he made room for Ibsen's work, and had his plays capably reviewed and at great length. It was in his paper that the first biographical notice of Ibsen appeared. In the blackest days of Ibsen's poverty, Botten-Hansen helped him to publishers; and himself undertook the publication of *Lady Inger of Ostraat* (1857) and *The Vikings of Helgeland* (1858).

With this group of literary wits, in Botten-Hansen's library or at a little Swiss café, Ibsen

spent all the hours that he could spare from the work at the theatre.

In this his thirtieth year, he returned to Bergen on a short visit, to be married to Susanna Thoressen, whose companionship was to be the great solace of his stormy life. In the autumn following Ibsen's marriage Byornsen left Bergen and settled in Christiania; and the friendship began between the two men that was to have so profound an influence over both their lives. They, soon after, founded the "Norwegian Society," which was to attack all foreign influence in the arts.

In this year died honest Schulerud, who had given Ibsen his first step to fame.

At the close of the year, Ibsen's only child, Sigurd, was born; and early in 1860 Byornsen stood godfather to the little fellow. In May Byornsen went abroad for three years.

Ibsen had been painting in oils whilst at Christiania; he now gave up painting altogether, being wholly taken up with dramatic writing.

The Saga Plays

In 1862, Ibsen's thirty-fourth year, whilst still director of the Norwegian Theatre, he petitioned the university for twenty-seven pounds for two months' summer travel in the fiords in order to collect folk-songs and legends. He was granted twenty-five. During the summer the theatre failed and robbed him of his means of livelihood. His salary had been wholly inadequate to keep his wife and child. His debts had grown. He was now in dire straits.

In the autumn of his twenty-ninth year, on completing *The Vikings*, Ibsen had begun to make notes for another historical tragedy, *The Pretenders;* but had put it aside for a drama of modern life, *The Comedy of Love* —the satirical mood being strong upon him.

But he was fretted and troubled about the form in which to cast *The Comedy of Love;* and in the effort to develop an artistic form to fit the play, he spent a long time—a delay

greatly increased by his fierce interest in the dramatic warfare that came out of *The Vikings* and in the political squabbles then harassing the town.

He saw that a modern comedy must be written in prose; the characters must speak the cultured speech of the day.

He roughed out the plot and began to write the play. But he had formed the habit of writing the saga prose; and could not rid himself of the phrasing of mediaeval romance and of the atmosphere which it creates. Baffled by this unforeseen difficulty of writing ordinary speech, he was harassed by the sense of stiffness in his dialogue. Distressed by the lack of vitality in this stiff prose, he fell back on the rhymed verse in which he had acquired facility, and the vivacity and wit that resulted are truly astonishing. It is equally astonishing to see the struggle that it cost Ibsen to get these vivid qualities into prose as spoken today—ending, as we shall see, in his triumph

over that mighty medium ten years later in *The League of Youth.*

The scene of *The Comedy of Love* is a country house; the characters ordinary men and women in the dress and habit of the day—a lawyer, a wholesale dealer, students, and, for the first time, a stupid parson steps on to the Norwegian stage.

The rhyming play is three acts of bold satire on marriage.

A daring novel, *The Sheriff's Daughters*, by Camilla Collett, was causing a profound sensation. Ibsen owed to her even the now famous simile of the tea, the true tea that the Celestial Emperor alone may drink, which, gathered first, is so delicate that it is picked with gloved hands, after the pickers have washed themselves forty times.

Camilla Collett's novel was an attack on the marriage of convenience—no marriage could be happy if not based on love.

Ibsen, on the other hand, attacked love-

marriage with biting satire. Love breaks down under the modern conditions of marriage. From the moment the lovers come into the open and declare their love, love receives its sentence of death. The friends and relations intrude their interest in the betrothed couple—then comes marriage with all its mean social struggles—then the sordid care of children. It begins in a festival and ends in the commonplace. Most couples instead of being uplifted by love, sink to mere sordid habit of love. The girl's good looks go; and the man's fire; and both become the meek slaves of a convention. People of to-day are too petty-minded to dare to love.

In contrast to all this dull and stupid torpor of loving, Ibsen shows two passionate, heroic lovers, Falk and Svanhild, who, dreading that their love may sink into this commonplace thing, decide to part and live on the memory of it.

Ibsen does not show contempt for the illu-

sion of love—he admires that. His contempt is for *the decay of character that follows on the acceptance of the vulgar convention of the legal union*, that degenerates into a make-believe love, an hypocrisy—a concession to respectability, not the real love of the lovers—therefore a lie.

Yet Ibsen leaves us baffled here, as he does still more at the end of his career, as to how much, if any, of marriage should remain, or what is to take its place for the better.

Like his own pessimistic Falk, Ibsen has greater faith in the ennobling effect of loss and remembrance than in the joy of possession. For, if the joy be not brief it palls.

Now, mark you, this play is not only a stinging satire on modern marriage—it is a blasting satire on love itself. It searches out the significance of love; and displays it as one of only two things—either becoming a mere habit, or the passionate flame of a few moments. A dull thing—or a gay bubble.

This miserable concept of life shows Ibsen's

bias towards the grey pessimism that sees ever the sorrow, never the joy, of life. And whilst much that he says of love and marriage is true, it is not true that motherhood and children bring no splendour of their own into life —it utterly ignores the splendid comradeship of a happy marriage, as Ibsen was bound to ignore it, who was incapable of seeing the splendour of friendship. Most of all it shows him as the degenerate who glories in the denial and lack of life, by his solemn statement of the fatuity that loss and remembrance have a more ennobling effect than the joy of possession. This is the weakling's unhealthiness that prefers to be passively miserable rather than risk the palling of joy! So the miser embraces his cold gold for fear of the joy of spending it.

Love, says Ibsen, to live and elevate, must become a memory—a pure spiritual treasure in the soul. Why the shadow should be more elevating than the substance he does not show.

The Saga Plays

There is no subject on which conventional society is more settled than on that of marriage. Men and women say just the things that Ibsen has said with keen wit—it was no new discovery. But when it is seriously stated as a review of life in a work of art, the world turns upon the artist and accuses him of playing with a "dirty subject"! It was inevitable that Ibsen's serious distrust of love lasting a lifetime should be bitterly resented by conventional society—and that, too, in proportion to the amount of its shaken confidence. The book, grimly issued by Ibsen as the New Year's gift of a weekly illustrated paper for the home, roused a yell of anger. Ibsen was bitterly attacked, in print and in speech, as "immoral," as papistical in his approval of celibacy, and what not. People mixed up his personal affairs with his play in the heated discussion, and he fell greatly in the public's estimation. The one person who approved of the play was his wife. "They excommunicated me," writes

Ibsen; "all were against me. . . *The Comedy of Love* is the forerunner of *Brand;* for, in it I have represented the contrast in our present state of society between the actual and the ideal in all that relates to love and marriage."

At the New Year (1863), Ibsen was made artistic manager of the old Christiania Theatre, at five guineas a month. His salary was not only smaller now than it had been, but liable to be cut down whensoever the takings of the theatre were not enough to cover it. He had to fall back on money-lenders of the vilest kind.

His best paid work, *The Vikings*, had brought him thirty-one pounds! He was in debt for more than a hundred. He began to contemplate emigrating to Denmark. In this his thirty-fifth year, he addressed an humble petition to the king for ninety pounds to travel abroad for six months in order to study dra-

matic art and literature. He was refused; though it had already been granted to Byornsen and Vinje.

In March he rendered an account to the university, in airy fashion enough, of his two months' collecting of songs and legends in the fiords during the previous summer. He explained that the publisher who was printing his collection of seventy to eighty unpublished popular Norwegian legends had failed; at the same time he petitioned the university for another twenty-seven pounds for two months' summer travel further to prosecute his search. He had been busy all the winter upon a complete collection of Norwegian popular legends. He received the grant; spent it upon the summer travel; but seems to have rendered no account of it.

Four days after writing this petition to the university, he petitioned the king a second time to aid him in his literary career.

In April, Byornsen received a pension of

ninety pounds a year; and Ibsen seems to have taken heart again. In May he again petitioned the king.

In the summer Byornsen and Ibsen met again at the Festival of Song at Bergen. "They were all so good to me at Bergen," writes Ibsen. This year brought them very closely together. Byornsen's friendship came at a most critical time to Ibsen. Doubt and despondency as to his own powers had been gnawing at Ibsen's soul with as harsh tooth as penury had been gnawing at his body. It seemed impossible to get free, out of the mire that he was in. He was filled with dread as to whether instead of a world-champion of great ideas he was to be "merely the clever author." This fight, which had to be in silence and alone, was made doubly bewildering by his unbelief in all the conventional ideas of the world about him. Byornsen came to his aid. A man of vigorous personality, of a steadfast faith which lit his every act, he was incapable

of doubt. He believed in himself, in his fellow-man, in good. From the contagious splendour of Byornsen's faith, from his undoubtingness, Ibsen, the doubter, learnt to have strength even in his doubting—to have belief in himself—and to risk all for his aims. The bright, happy joyousness of Byornsen's faith and gladness in life was never Ibsen's; but it taught Ibsen that he must be up and ridding the world of mere doubt—that if the world's ideals were bad, all the more reason to strike them down and find new and true ideals.

It gave Ibsen a courage that never failed. It gave him confidence in his own aim to "realise himself," and in a fearless and untiring effort, that lasted him through life, *to arouse the world and open its eyes to a freer, richer future, and of its need to rid itself of false ideals—ideals which it did not believe it could achieve in acts.* The first rich result was his play, *The Pretenders.*

He put upon the stage, stripped of all claptrap and disguise, the naked soul of a self-

doubter of heroic stature—and in the doing, gazing upon the tragic thing that it was, he rid himself of his weakness.

Like his young poet Falk, he saw that the hawk needs an adverse wind if it would reach swiftly to the height of his flight—saw that if he had the pinions for great achievement he too must have the opposing winds to bear him to the dizzy realms where the great alone may breathe unafraid. Smaller wings the storm may beat down; the larger spirit it but uplifts.

During this summer, Ibsen began his new historical prose drama in five acts, *The Pretenders*, or rivals to the throne. He wrote this astounding masterpiece in six weeks!

Here we have the tragedy of the man who steals the *thought* of another—just as in *The Vikings* we have the tragedy of the man who steals the *deed* of another.

Hakon and Skule are pretenders to the throne, men of blood royal, and both of them

men out of whom a king could be made. But Hakon is born with the gift of confidence, the sense of right, the gift for victory, the strange gift of good fortune—Skule is a brooding man, a prey to inward struggle and unceasing self-distrust, courageous, wise, noble and ambitious, and with every quality for, and a full claim to, kingship; but he is without just that certain something which makes for success. He sees himself that he has the King's right arm, the King's brain, but Hakon is the King. Hakon, no bolder than Skule, no wiser nor abler than Bishop Nicolas, is yet the greater man, because he is the lucky, the "happy-fortunate" man.

"The happy-lucky man is the greatest man. He is the most fortunate who does the mightiest deeds—him the cravings of his time seize like a passion, begetting thoughts that he cannot fathom, pointing to paths which lead he knows not whither, yet which he follows and must follow until at the shout of triumph of

his people he finds himself, with eyes of wonder, the hero of a great achievement."

Such is Hakon. Everything thrives with him. The people begin to think the trees bear fruit twice, the fields yield double produce, where Hakon is. Every one in his way, every obstacle, seems to be flung down for him.

Skule broods on all this.

"The right is Hakon's, bishop," says Skule. To which the other replies: "The right is his, for he is the fortunate one; 'tis the summit of fortune to have the right; but by what right has Hakon the right, and not you?"

At one stride Ibsen has taken a problem of life by the throat, has put into clear terms of art the profound struggle of "right" and "good fortune"—of the ethical law with the natural law—and realises that nature is all-conquering. Formal Right is not right in itself; but that is right which is good for the community.

Skule realises that, whether Hakon has the formal right to the throne, it does not matter;

Hakon believes that he is the right king—*that* is the core of his good fortune, *that* "the girdle of his strength." He has confidence, and faith that never swerves, that he is the rightful heir.

Skule's wide ambition cannot brook subjection to another. He must have power at all costs. He tells Hakon he must share the throne with him; he will stake his life upon it; he challenges him to single combat.

But Hakon's confidence is no empty boast—it rests on his knowledge of his own superior wisdom in kingship, and has nothing to do with single combats. His reply crushes Skule: He was young and untried when he came to the helm—and now there are no rebellious factions in the state!

To Skule's retort that it is so much the worse for him, since it is by every village, nay, every family, being against the others, that they have most need to fear the King, Hakon replies: "And *you* would be King who think

thus! The time has grown away from you, and you know it not. Norway has been a kingdom. She shall become a people. All shall be one hereafter; and all shall know and feel that they are one."

Skule is impressed: "To unite? 'Tis impossible. Norway's saga tells of no such thing."

To which Hakon speaks the mighty word of Progress against Conservatism: "For you 'tis impossible; for you can but work out the old saga afresh. For me, 'tis as easy as for the falcon to cleave the clouds."

Overwhelmed by the truth of Hakon's vision, Skule is seized with the criminal desire to steal Hakon's "thought," and usurp it. He proclaims himself King. He fights; and to his surprise, he conquers. He scarcely dares to believe that he has won. He trembles even in the face of victory. Has he the strength to use the King's "thought"?

Racked with doubt, he longs to have about

him those who believe in him. He is feverishly anxious to win the friendship of his Skald. He asks the Skald if he, Skule, the King, who has the might, were to have him slain, would all his "Skald-thoughts" die with him?

"My lord," answers the Skald, "it were a grievous sin to slay a fair thought."

Skule presses him closer to the stolen thought that is burning in his soul. Has the Skald never wished to slay another Skald to take his thought from him and make it into song for himself? The Skald replies that he is not barren, that he has no need for the thoughts of other men.

Skule seizes him by the arm, eagerly:

"What gift do I need to become a King?" he asks.

"My lord," says the Skald, "you *are* a King!"

Skule utters the reply that it is destroying him:

"Have you, at all times, full faith that you are a Skald?"

What a superb dramatic statement of the man's soul!

At last, in his son, Skule finds strength; his son believes in him—accepts the "King's thought"—realises its grandeur and its power—devotes his life to its fulfilment. But the harassing knowledge of guilt falls upon Skule. He loses every battle; and, at last, when his son commits sacrilege, Skule, humbled, strips himself of the royal robes he has stolen, and confesses to his son that he has thieved "the King's thought" from Hakon. They die together, father and son.

A strange sense of preordained "vocation" in life always held Ibsen. We find him urging it as a plea in his petition to the king for help to pursue his career.

In this play this increasing note of confidence in a "call" reaches to its height.

The one man walks to his goal, the way

smoothed for him by the "Power Above"—the other doubts, hesitates, uncertain as to which course to pursue of two that look equally good. He has not the "King's thought" to guide.

Here we have the contrast between the self-reliance of the healthy race, the coming generation inspired by the new thought, and the self-distrust which is the "gnawing maggot of the age," due to the dread or inability of the old peoples to be rid of outworn ideals.

The art of this play is prodigious. The skill with which Ibsen takes the philosophic idea and turns it into terms of the emotions, translates it into the action of life, creates theory into the realities, is astounding. The poetry is of the highest order. The idea makes for grandeur; and Ibsen achieves the grandeur of it with a skill and force that make it reach to the sublime. The time and the background are chosen with consummate judgment. It is no attempt or concern of Ibsen's to reconstruct

a period; he uses history simply as the arena for modern ideas.

In *The Pretenders* Ibsen had to cast aside the unity of time, of which he was so skilled a master, and the unity of scene which largely results therefrom. Years had to elapse during the action. Ibsen was no pedant. The result splendidly justified him. In King Hakon and Duke Skule he gave to the world two of the greatest characters in all drama.

Even *The Pretenders* failed to show the nation that Norway had produced a man of astounding genius. Ibsen had now written many beautiful lyrics and several dramas. But they were printed in hideous print on wretched paper. A few copies were sold and brought the poet but a lukewarm recognition.

Whilst Byornsen was already hailed as the national genius, Ibsen, now half through his thirties, was passed by unnoticed.

He had a valuable friend in Dunker, a dis-

tinguished barrister, and a man who influenced the social and intellectual life of the day. A weighty adviser to Ibsen in his literary work, his friendship helped Ibsen in society. Another valuable friend was Sverdrup, the new leader of the Liberals, a man of European fame. Indeed, Ibsen, penniless and harassed with debt, had to accept money from Sverdrup and others. They helped him most generously with the government as well as out of their own pockets—and Byornsen pleaded his cause in and out of season.

In September the government gave him ninety pounds as a travelling grant. It turned his eyes to Rome. But so embarrassed were his affairs, he was in such distress and debt, that he had to be helped out of the country by Byornsen and others; and could not leave until the following spring. Indeed, had it not been for Byornsen's whole-soul'd championship and help—not only during this winter, but with money raised from public and private sources

for him whilst in Italy—the sensitive and lonely man must have sunk.

Many things made Ibsen out of love with his native land.

Christiania is not a city in which art and literature flourish. The life is narrow; scandal and calumny thrive. "In proportion as men are ready to backbite," says Jaeger neatly, "so are they unready to recognise merit." And where judgment is carping, admiration for independence and originality is lacking. Christiania looked for her standard to Copenhagen —to conquer Christiania it was necessary to carry Copenhagen by storm.

Such a state of affairs in any community strikes hardest at creative genius—art and letters always suffer most. Christiania has ever stoned her poets. To be a Norwegian poet is to go into the desert.

Actresses attacked him in the newspapers when they thought themselves neglected—and always found critics to support them.

The theatre paid a meagre salary; and his publishers paid him less. And Ibsen had neither the taste nor the qualities for journalism.

To a man of Ibsen's high artistic ideals and severe self-judgment, authorship was slow starvation.

He felt that he must get away from his narrow surroundings and see life in the large. He saw that at home he must inevitably be ruined as an author.

The bitter attacks made upon him on the appearance of *The Comedy of Love* had exasperated him. *The Pretenders* failed to catch the public attention it deserved from the critics; and made no stir. His despondency as to his career touched bottom.

And when, in spite of the passionate promises made by the students at their great assemblies—"'Twas but a lie in festal song, a kiss that Judas gave"—and as solemnly given by the Scandinavian party in the public press,

Norway and Sweden drew back from going to the help of their "brother-nation Denmark," on the day of battle with Prussia and Austria—when they instead stood aloof, broke their solemn pledges and struck no blow to save the robbery of a province whose speech was of their speech, and blood of their blood, Ibsen, filled with contempt for his native land, disgusted with her pettiness, her faintheartedness, and her sluggish indifference, turned his back upon her, and on a day in spring shook her dust from off his feet.

VIII.

In the thirty-sixth year of his age, with gloomy prospects and embittered mind, Ibsen, travelling through Copenhagen, where he had to leave his wife and four-year-old child, headed for Rome by way of Berlin, beginning that long exile which ended only when he was old and white-haired and world-famous.

The end of his struggle with penury was not yet.

He hurried from Berlin, deeply humiliated at the sight of the triumph of the populace on the entry of the trophies from the battle of Dybbol, the people riding on the captured Danish gun-carriages and spitting into the cannon—"the cannon that had no help, yet went on shooting until they burst."

So, through Trieste, he came to Rome. Besides the sunlit glamour of this land, Rome held for Ibsen the added glamour of her great past. And he now conceived the plan of writing a drama upon Julian the Apostate.

When Ibsen left Norway, it was only on a travelling grant for a few months; the directorship of the theatre was still open to him. Byornsen applied for the place; and an intrigue seems to have been started, on Ibsen's reaching Rome in the summer, to try to induce Ibsen to keep it, in order to get rid of Byornsen's dominant ways. A sharp negative from Ibsen secured Byornsen the office.

Ibsen found in Rome a "blessed peace for writing"; and the autumn saw him settled in lodgings and sending for his wife and little one, and at work on a long poem and his tragedy of *Julian*—which "fills him with irrepressible joy."

Ancient art at first baffled him; but with great astuteness he realised that the modern men were making a vital mistake in being too much influenced by the works of the great dead, instead of creating a modern art of their own.

The end of the year saw Ibsen in severe distress for money, and in debt. He was living on borrowed money; and suffering agonies by consequence.

A year after leaving Norway, he applied to the Norwegian Scientific Society for a grant of a hundred and twelve pounds to enable him to remain in Rome another year and finish his "long dramatic work" founded on Roman history. This, in spite of Byornsen's eloquent support, was refused.

In the autumn a second and more urgent appeal made by Byornsen brought twenty-two pounds to enable him to complete *Julian*. But it was to be many a day before Ibsen set himself to write the play "founded on Roman history."

When a man falls foul of his country as satirist, it is no proof of his hatred, but rather of his love—of his passionate eagerness to see his people arise from sloth and weakness.

Ibsen's antagonism to his nation, his angry resolve "to sever all ties with Norway and never again set foot on her soil," were outbursts of rage at her slowness in seeking liberty and high ideals, as a people. Their indifference to the loss of Schleswig and Holstein stung him to the painful verdict that "the Norwegians of to-day have no more relation to the past than the Greek pirates to the race that sailed to Troy and was helped by the gods."

He had felt that he must get away from the racket of the parochial pump, if he were to see life in the large. Rome had not yet become the capital of Italy; had not yet been "taken away from human beings and given to the politicians," her people had no politics, no commercial aims, no militarism. To Rome he had set his face, and, once there, "could not understand how one could live anywhere else."

But, once abroad, rid of petty parochial strife, he could stand away from his people and see them in their true perspective. His heart is in Norway—always. He reads Scandinavian newspapers hungrily—regularly—and with keen eyes. He writes to Norway for news, who is not given to the writing of letters. He joins clubs where Scandinavians meet; and feverishly seeks the companionship of such as travel his way. Indeed, as early as a year in exile, he is writing to Byornsen: "I must come home again after all . . . . From the land of sunshine and flowers, every night,

in the silent hours, a homeless rider hies him forth towards the huts of the snowy north."

Still, life in Norway "has something indescribably wearisome about it; it wearies the soul out of one, wearies the strength out of one's will. That is the accursed thing about small surroundings—they make the soul small. I feel sure that the good people of Weimar were Goethe's worst public."

But the glamour of the old Roman tragedy was falling from him. He was about to feel and write as a Norwegian again.

He felt an astonishing capacity for work in Rome, and "the strength of a giant-killer." He made walking-tours in the neighbourhood, knapsack on back. At Ariccia he was known to the peasants as "Il cappellone"—the man with the big hat—the huge, broad-brimmed wide-awake, which his friends, chaffing him, used to call, from the colour of its lining, "the blue grotto."

But he was restless. The play would not come into shape.

The fact was that the excitement of his change was wearing off; and Ibsen's eyes were coming back to his own race and his own age. He could look upon his race now unfettered by the local din. He was about to put that people to the severe test of his mighty satire.

From now we shall see Ibsen setting up not the obvious follies but the ideals of the age and bringing them before the bar of judgment —they have to stand at trial by ordeal. Will they stand the trial of the scalding inquisition and the cleansing by fire? Or will they shrivel and burn?

He had seen the cannon of the defeated Dane brought in triumph to Berlin—the idea for a play "began to grow within him like an embryo." He had come to Italy and seen its peoples welded together through a spirit of self-sacrifice—the idea for the play grew. If a man or a people were to triumph, the cause must be All or Nothing. He would set upon the stage not only his people half-heartedly

practising its highest ideal; but he would set amongst them a master-mind of unbending will who should carry out that ideal to its complete logical end; and so put to the test, not only whether the people were striving by act as well as by lip-service to follow their ideal, but whether that ideal, when followed by an heroic soul, were in itself a noble thing!

Now, that in which his generation was chiefly steeped was its pietism. So be it. Where was this pietism leading the race, even if the age shed its half-heartedness and followed it?

In July he was at Ariccia, in the Alban Hills, at his wits' end not only for money but also about his work, which would not come to him nor shape itself in his mind. He had walked into Rome on an errand, and strolled into St. Peter's, when, suddenly, he saw "in strong and clear outlines, the form for what he had to say." He hurried back to Ariccia, flung aside

all the plans and schemes with which he had been torturing himself for a whole year past, and began a new play, which "progressed as nothing has ever progressed with me before."

A dramatic poem, modern in subject, serious in tone, in five acts of rhymed verse. The fourth act was nearly finished by September, within two months of its inception. He felt that he could write the fifth in a week. Upon this work he had wrought morning and night for the first time in his life. He knew no one. He read only the Bible—"it has vigour and power."

He wrote it, and *Peer Gynt*, which followed it, at a pressure which came near to nervous breakdown. He would write and write verses day and night—even when half asleep in bed, being sometimes so impressed with their merit that he got out of bed to write them down, but though he judged them good at the moment, they were often utter nonsense.

At Ariccia he arose at four or five in the

morning, went for a walk, and, when he returned, was in good mood for work.

In three months, working at it day and night, it was finished.

The play was *Brand.*

Hitherto the poets of Norway had burnt incense to the land and its people. Ibsen shattered the hypocrisies.

For scenery we have a bleak mountain-valley where the snow falls, storms grow and threaten and rage, glacier and snow hold mighty dangers—a valley into which the life-giving sun shines only for three short weeks of the long, dreary year, and that, too, only on the upper walls of the mountain's sides that hem it in—a place where all that is frail and delicate and tender sickens and dies. Here neither corn nor the fruits of the earth ripen; and famine stalks through the place like an eternal curse.

This is Norway; and the people who live

therein are the people of Norway—poor folk who, with bitter labour, filch a pittance from nature in her most grudging mood, so that, stultified and exhausted, with bowed necks and bent backs, their eyes fixed on the tyrant earth, their thoughts and their imagination are unable to soar to the heavens with the birds—their daily food their sole ambition—their very notion of their God an earthly one: "paints its God with velvet cap and senile nod."

He sets in this bleak valley public men:

The village-mayor, so much an official that he has lost all manhood—who, when called on to help those in distress, does not ask about their needs, but as to whether they are of his parish—a well-meaning dullard, whose boast and aim are but of material things, population, increase of trade, increase of revenue—"he chains the will that's strong and young—he drowns the songs that might be sung; his pinched and pigeon-breasted mind goes out to

murder his own kind, to slay the smile on simple lips, to veil the soul's light in eclipse, and with a bloodless arm to smother the love that hearts bear one another."

The priest has no real care for the souls of his people; he is an official of the state, pointing them to an ideal on Sunday that they cannot carry out in their work-a-day week—he considers first what is best for the state, then what is best for himself. This officialism of the mind goes all through the community. It is in the schoolmaster—in the very sexton. "Ah! to dare to feel, for one moment, sexton!"

"Come," says the sexton, "no one's looking —let us feel."

Indeed, the majority, lulled to ineptitude and rank materialism by the official class, looks upon such as would stir it to higher thinking and nobler emotions as crazy folk. So the ideal of the people is to be uniform, like every one else, without character or individuality, walking the earth with eyes cast down

in humility, and in self-annihilation. The state, and its servant, the church, would drill the nation into a dullard gang with a dull paradise for end.

Always Ibsen strikes at suburbanism, and at the state. His battle-cry: Freedom and Individuality. Be yourself.

Into the midst of this people he flings a man of iron will, who has for his aim in life the same ideal that this people holds to be, but dares not be—"the perfect man." This happens to be the puritan. Well, Ibsen calls him forth and sets him amongst them naked to his soul: his name Pastor Brand.

Pastor Brand has no delusions about their smug respectability; nor about their official church. His fierce battle-cry is "All or Nothing."

Brand is the tragedy of the man who would force his ideals upon all other men and women.

He has will and enthusiasm and strength for very breath. He is against all compromise;

it is slaying the individual strength of the people. He is the eagle-winged idealist soaring above the grovelling reality; and his ideal is that things shall not be as they are, but as they ought to be. Man must be made to be what it is his duty to be.

For the God he preaches, the old official church is too small. He locks its door and flings the key out into the waters. He will build a mightier church for the people.

In pursuing his ideal he spares neither himself nor others—for life does not matter, self does not matter, the perfect man is all.

He has to cross the fiord to go to a sick soul. It is deadly dangerous to cross in such a storm as is raging. The only one who does not shrink to go with him is a gentle girl, Agnes. She goes; she believes in him. He marries her; and to him she bears a child.

The child is ailing and cannot live unless it is sent away from this awful valley. Brand decides that it must die rather than take him

from his appointed task of leading the people. The child dies. Brand forbids Agnes even to dwell upon the dead child. The utterance in this poem of mother's love for her dead child grips the heart, clutches at the throat—all its mysterious sacredness, its frenzy of adoration, that Ibsen makes naked to the world, leap out upon us, and set the lip a-quiver in a tragedy from which the sense of love seems otherwise hellishly absent in the fierceness of this religious zeal to save the soul.

It is perhaps from the time that the poor stricken mother, Agnes, pores over the little dead one's clothes, and places the candle in the window that its light may fall across the snow upon his little grave to give the sleeping one a little gleam of Christmas cheer, that the heroism of Brand's narrow faith becomes a damnable and accursed thing, and heroic strength alone shows itself a brutality.

Brand's murderous cruelty of pietism increases in his heroic devotion to duty. He

compels his wife to give the dead child's clothes to a gypsy woman whose child needs them. The poor mother gives them ungrudgingly, but holds back one small garment as keepsake of her little one. Brand compels her to give it up, and breaks the stricken heart that can bear no further suffering.

His own mother is dying. He refuses to go to her death-bed to give her absolution, because she has not the courage to do her duty.

He is now become a saint to his people. His church is too small to hold his flock. He leads them to worship his God in the open mountains. He is making them suffer what he has made every one suffer. He compels their ideal of puritanism upon them, as he has compelled it upon himself, and they stand shivering in the bleak, frozen mountains stripped of all the joys of life. At last it dawns upon them that this pietism is not good. They turn upon him, stone him, and leave him.

Bleeding, he makes his way to the moun-

tains alone, where a mad girl mistakes him for the thorn-crowned Christ. He has kept the commandments of his ideal. He is left in his ideal church alone, amidst the icy mountains, without a single tender human memory; and the mountains themselves slay him with an avalanche.

He dies a saint, rid of every earthly joy, and having created, in order to reach to saintliness, a hell of suffering such as the vilest debauchee could scarce be guilty of creating.

A light-o'-love stands a noble thing beside such lack-o'-love, who snatches from his wife her dead child's clothes, and whose hellish piety lets his mother go to hell. Ibsen has been attacked, in that, whilst he shows that the conventional pietism of his people leads but to self-annihilation and to death, he does not show a way out.

To show the way out was not Ibsen's aim. The age is on its trial before Ibsen; not Ibsen before the age.

Brand

He gives us a man of heroic will carrying out, not Ibsen's theory of life, but the theory of life of the very people who have not the will to carry it out, nor the courage to reject it—who compromise practice with theory through hypocrisies. Heroic will cannot live without compromise in the smug, hypocritical life of the state to-day. Heroic will seeks to save decaying society. But let it see to it that the ideal of its reform is a noble ideal and one that can be realised by acts, not an ideal that is false to its very foundations. For, if the ideal be false, even the heroic will that would achieve it must fail.

Here we have a man of heroic will, giving battle to the respectability and convention of the day. We are in the presence of an indignant man of genius, whose flashing eyes, passionate sincerity, and vigorous will stir a sense of shame in the very dullard and such as are of weak purpose. It is only when we realise the destruction that follows in the path of

the man of heroic will who really attempts to fulfil accepted pietism as a reality, that we reel bewildered at the abyss to which he would lead us.

To the charge made against him all his life long that his art was destructive, and to the question whether he could point out what would be better than the present state of affairs, Ibsen answered all his life long:

"To ask is my vocation; not to answer."

He was a satirist.

He said that the ideals of the age were rotten.

He set up these ideals, stripped them naked, and put them to the test—and the ordeal was the ordeal of the cleansing fire of truth, the scalding water of satire—through which only nobility may walk and live.

He did not say what should be, instead. At that we may only guess by inference—from what he said should not be.

Brand's ideal of pietism is an ideal that is

not, and cannot live amongst the realities. And just as Cervantes showed that Don Quixote, the moment that he tried to make the ideal of chivalry real, by putting it into acts amongst the realities of life, must fail; so Ibsen showed that Brand, the moment that he tried to make the ideal of his pietism real, by putting it into acts, brought nothing but suffering upon all he had loved, and built only a castle in the clouds that none may inhabit.

The theory that the Danish theologian Kierkegaard was the original of Brand, Ibsen treated with contempt. The critical hobby of "attribution" always irritated him. "Of Kierkegaard," he wrote, "I have read little, and understand less."

The man whom he largely took as his model for Brand was Pastor Lammers, who, in Ibsen's youth, started at Skien the great religious upheaval that bears his name. Still, Lammers was influenced by Kierkegaard. Ibsen's

native town had always been a hotbed of pietism and sectarianism; and the frenzied "revival" that Lammers started spread over the country—several of Ibsen's nearest kin caught the madness. Lammers created considerable commotion in the church. He insisted on entering every home of his flock, with greeting and enquiry after the state of every member. He was an imperious "father of souls," and shrank never to wage war against worldliness. Then he took to hesitation in giving absolution and in the like priestly offices—then he only allowed his curate to perform them—then, in distress of mind, he begged his own dismissal from the church, with a pension. His farewell sermon was printed; he fiercely assailed the church; he denied the sacraments to all save those who had in reality "turned to the Lord"; the unrepentant were to be refused —only the converted were to receive; he condemned infant baptism as monstrous; he forbade the religious ceremony at marriage and

at burial—both being, more often than not, the blessing of an hypocrisy—no one had a right to judge the dead, far less to absolve the dead. And he prayed that in this valley, "no church-service should ever be performed, only the worship of God in spirit and in truth, on holy days and on working days alike." So he gathered his flock about him and led them into the mountains to worship, but unable to lead them further, he left them in the wilderness and took himself abroad to Dresden, where Ibsen met him. But even Lammers was not wholly Brand; Ibsen found him full of the joy of life in Dresden, fond of the playhouse, a painter and a musician.

Ibsen had found the greatest difficulty in getting his books published; but during this autumn of his writing *Brand*, Byornsen introduced him to the great Scandinavian publisher, Frederik Hegel, of Copenhagen.

In November Ibsen got an offer from Hegel

for *Brand.* He replied next day, accepting it, and sending the manuscript. "I feel," he wrote, "that it is my life-task to employ the powers which God has given me in arousing my countrymen from their lethargy, and obliging them to see in what direction the great questions of life point."

Hegel became not only publisher and paymaster to Ibsen, but a faithful friend, adviser, and helper in need. And we find him, when Ibsen began to make money, even acting as his stockbroker.

Ibsen felt himself at last intellectually a free man. Escaped from the narrow society of Norway, he had now secured a high-minded man of business for publisher. It was the emergence from prison.

When Ibsen in his thirty-seventh year sent *Brand* to Copenhagen he was in direst want.

Having written it in a state of exaltation "worthy of a crusader," he, in the waiting for it to appear, became worn out with anxiety—

fearing that it would make strife—unable to settle to anything new—yet, on the eve, he gathers confidence in his "I will and shall have a victory some day."

He was anxious to get a pension from the government; he dreaded that *Brand* would not propitiate those in power. But he writes, "Hang me if I can or will, on that account, suppress a single line, no matter what these pocket-edition souls think of it. Let me rather be a beggar for life! If I cannot be myself in what I write, then the whole is nothing but lies and humbug; and of these our country has enough, without giving special grants to get more."

Brand appeared in the mid-March of 1866; and was at once a success.

It was the turning point in Ibsen's career.

In Norway an entire literature sprang up round *Brand;* and, with it, Ibsen also made his mark at once in Denmark; but the essential

value and character both of his art and his significance were quite missed.

Danish literature was under the heels of conventional criticism, of academic critics such as Petersen, who refused to accept *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen's next book, as poetry at all. It was this man's schoolmasterly soul that drew from Ibsen his belief in himself: "My book *is* poetry; and if it is not, then it will be. The conception of poetry shall be made to conform to the book."

And he spoke with the arrogant foresight of genius. It was not Denmark that imposed her conventions of beauty upon his original genius; but Ibsen who completely overthrew and rebuilt the Danish concept of poetry.

Ibsen's chief lesson after he left Norway was to drive out of himself the aestheticism which had so great a grip upon him—the aestheticism which claims a separate and complete existence as "art for art's sake." He saw that it was "as great a curse to poetry as theology is to religion."

He realised that it was to Byornsen that he chiefly owed his salvation from the "aesthetic asses."

He had also learnt that, though the gift of words is a great gift, it brings solemn responsibility.

It was a part of the irony that dogged Ibsen's life, that people rushed to the booksellers and bought edition after edition of *Brand*, which made his fame as a poet, not owing to its merits as a poem, but because the hero was a priest. The intention of the play was wholly missed. As Ibsen pathetically complained, his being a priest does not really matter. "Brand is myself in my best moments," just as at times are Peer Gynt and Stensgaard; and "the demand All or Nothing is made in all domains of life"—in love, in art, in all.

When he was writing *Brand* he had, on his table, a glass with a scorpion in it. From time to time it would get ill. He would give

it a piece of soft fruit; and it would fall upon this furiously and empty its poison into it—after which it was well again. So with the satirist who is a poet. "The laws of nature rule the spiritual world."

"*Brand* is a work of art, pure and simple. What it may have demolished or built up is a matter of absolute indifference to me. It came into being as the result of something which I had, not observed, but *experienced;* it was a necessity for me to free myself from something which my inner man had done with, by giving poetic form to it; and when by this means I had got rid of it, my book had no longer any interest for me."

"*Brand* is not intended for the stage," says Ibsen.

It was one of three "dramatic poems"; but Ibsen's dramatic instinct was so profound that they make astoundingly fine plays in the acting.

In April, a month after *Brana* appeared, Ibsen petitioned his King for a pension of ninety pounds a year to enable him to devote him-

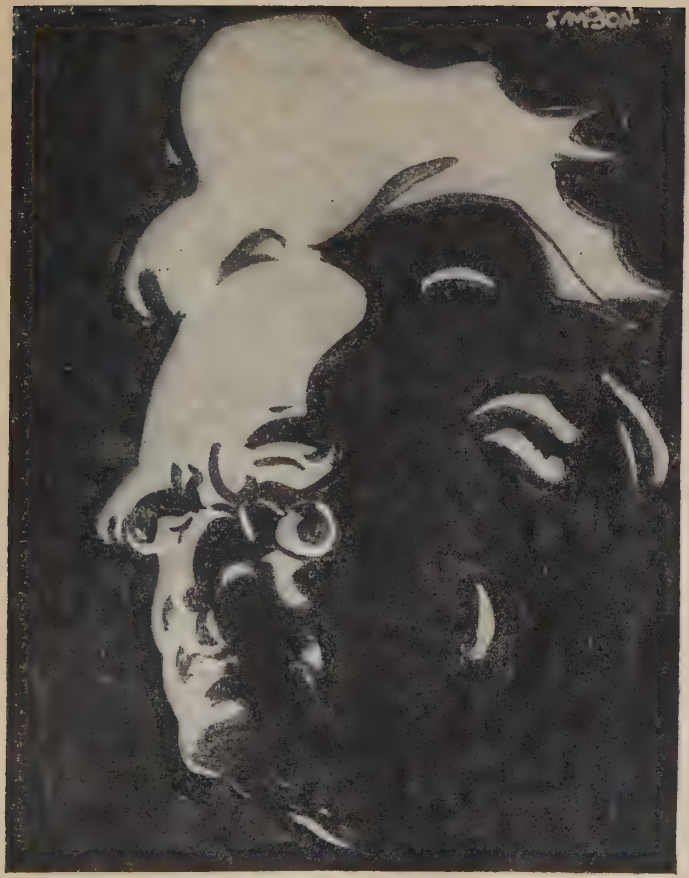
self exclusively to his calling as poet—"to devote myself to the task which I believe, and know, has been laid upon me by God—of arousing the nation and leading it to think great thoughts." Byornsen, Botten-Hansen, and other friends worked hard to get the pension for him. On the tenth of May it was voted almost unanimously by the Storthing. "My future," wrote Ibsen, "is now assured." Comical as was the granting of this state-pension to Ibsen by "the pocket-edition souls" on whom he had poured contempt for their lack of intelligence, it is even more comical to see how it in no way weakened his attacks on the state. He wanted to be free; and never seems to have seen the irony of begging the state to pay him for his freedom. He seems to have meditated upon making his home in Copenhagen at this time, "but further north I will not go." He sees that he could never lead a consistent spiritual life in Norway.

He displays a delightful human weakness in his eagerness for "press-cuttings"; and it raises a smile to find him setting aside a slice of his first profits for a little gamble over a lottery ticket.

The month of May brought him not only a small pension for life, but the new experience of a second edition of *Brand* being called for.

He turned his thoughts for a while to his Roman play of the *Emperor Julian* again, spending the summer in the mountains; but in July he was wrestling with a new subject. August saw *Brand* in a third edition; and by the end of the year it was in a fourth.

The relief to Ibsen of being able to work at his art free from other duties was very great. He deplores that journalism thieved so much of Byornsen's time and brains. And he dreaded the drudgery of a theatre for him: "For a poet, the toil of a theatre is the slaying of unborn babes."



Byornsterne Byornsen

Joseph Simpson

IX.

Ibsen was now brooding over two or three "motives" for plays. At last he decided upon his second dramatic poem. He started with no definite plan on which to build his idea except that he had decided upon the ending. He did not even know that he would take his hero to Africa. He himself said that it was much easier to write a "dramatic poem" like *Brand* or *Peer Gynt*, "in which you can bring in a little of everything," than to carry through a severe logical sequence for the stage, like that of *John Gabriel Borkman*.

The new poem was founded roughly on an old Norse story that clung about a real character.

At Ischia, early in January, 1867, he was well on his way upon his second long dramatic poem, in five acts, the entire plan sketched out and written down, and the first act begun.

In early March he was in the second act;

in August he had completed the third; the last act he finished at Sorrento in September.

It was to be known as *Peer Gynt.*

In *Brand* we have the sombre tragedy of the grey, Puritanical, Calvinistic pietism that is the theory of life in Norway, followed ruthlessly to its logical end, through the resolute will of an heroic saint who tries to compel all the rest of the world to the same sombre faith —to rid oneself of all the joys of life in order to reach purity of soul.

Ibsen's keen sense of justice next showed the other side of the Norwegian people to the world in *Peer Gynt.* He took the ordinary man as he really is at heart, with the commercial, money-making aim, and pushful, selfish individualism that seeks only after worldly success; and he created this worldly man into a hero, who follows out his destiny to its logical end.

Peer Gynt is the Norwegian people incar-

nate. Peer Gynt has no equal as a teller of the wonderful deeds that he has done. Weak and worthless, he romances himself into what he thinks a hero ought to be. He shrinks from his cowardice by steeping himself in imagination. He is cowardice, enabled to strut as hero through braggart self-deception.

Peer Gynt has for ideal the utter selfish gratification of his own individuality, regardless of the rest of the world. He glows with desire to be romantic, but has not the will to do the romantic thing. His ideal of man is a demi-goddish person with a will that can overcome all other wills, set back destiny—a masterly fellow and a fascinating dog whom no woman can refuse, one who is a born fighter, a mighty hunter, the ideal knight, the idol of the man in the street. He sees very soon that no such man may exist, since not to make way for anybody or anything means destruction at the hands of his fellows, that the anger of his race would slay him. He can therefore only de-

lude himself into thinking he is following out his ideal by weaving his illusions about himself, and lying himself into the delusion that he is the hero of his own lies—only thus can he deceive himself into the idea that his will is a force that can conquer all other forces.

So Peer Gynt, the idle, loafing vagabond of the country side, persuades himself that he is Emperor of Himself. He invents hunting adventures and deeds of military prowess. He seeks to gain the reputation of a dangerous dare-devil by carrying off a bride from a wedding at which his braggart talk is ridiculed by the guests. The scenes of his adventures are of course always wild places in the mountains. He deceives himself even into thinking that he can cleave his way to where he would go, through the mountain's side, sword in hand—but he not only finds the mountain stronger than his will, but even the great, clumsy body of the Boyg is in the way, and he has to go 'round. The

Boyg is the "spirit of compromise"—all that is cowardly and yielding in man, all that turns and goes by the roundabout way. He seeks adventure amongst the supernatural folk. He tries to think the dirty, foul daughter of the Trold-King on her hog to be a princess on a splendid steed—his mother's filthy old ramshackle hovel of a farmhouse, with its broken windows stuffed with clouts, a great castle—their filthy food the banquet of the gods—their low, obscene jiggings an exquisitely artistic measure—their life the life splendid; but when they want to slit his eyes so that he may henceforth see everything as the illusion he desires to see, he refuses—he has willed himself to be himself even in his self-deceit. So he gets him from the mountains and the supernatural to America, to become a prosperous, highly respectable trader, given to any speculation so that it bring him profit—he imports slaves, exports idols, Bibles, spirits, and piety. But he is left by his friends on a desert place in

Africa. His religious faith fails him—to be restored on seeing those who have betrayed and left him blown up in his steam-yacht which they have thieved from him—God is his father after all, though far from economical! Finding a white horse in the desert, he steals it; and is declared the Messiah by the Arabs. He is thrilled to find himself now worshipped for himself instead of, as lately, for the money behind his splendid breast-pin. But in his frenzy for a dancing-girl, Anitra, on whom he lavishes all he can with shameless recklessness, he gives her the white horse and, with it, his prophet's raiment, to find himself left alone in the desert again. Wandering to the Sphinx, and finding a German puzzling as to who the Sphinx is, he solves the problem for him, through knowledge of his own god of self, by saying that the Sphinx is itself. Dazzled by the solution of life through Egotism, the German takes him to a learned club in Cairo, which turns out to be a madhouse in which the mad have locked up

their keepers; and here, grovelling in terror in the dust, at the hands of the mad, Peer Gynt is crowned Emperor of Himself with a crown of straw.

At last he wanders homewards. He is shipwrecked. In pitiful dread of the Button-moulder, Death, he pushes another shipwrecked man off the floating spar to which they cling, lest it be not strong enough for both. But he has to face the Button-moulder at last. Peer Gynt claims as a title for admission to hell that he has been a slave-dealer. The "lean one" replies that there are many who have done worse, who have trafficked in wills and souls, yet who, having done it in a "twaddling way," without demoniacal earnestness, have not qualified even for hell, but only for the "casting-ladle"; he tells Peer Gynt that his end is not to be in the lake of fire, that he is to go into the casting-ladle and be melted down again—that he is no sinner—"it needs strength and earnestness to sin"—he is only second-rate, even as a sinner.

But Peer Gynt has found, waiting for him, still believing in him, his forsaken sweetheart, Solveig, now an old woman. She brings him into the kingdom of love. In her memory of him, he finds the untarnished, ideal Peer Gynt —beside which he sees his real self to be but a loafer, liar, braggart, speculator, false prophet, the toy of a harlot, the lord of madmen, a shabby murderer, one lacking all heroism, a mere vulgar self-seeker, shirking the responsibilities of life, a coward and a sensualist disguised under a shabby cloak of romantic lies—sees the gulf between his will to act and his power to act.

Yet, liar and rogue as he is, Peer Gynt at least does not make others suffer as Brand made them suffer—it had been better to be his wife or mother than Brand's. Indeed, that is a superb passage in which Peer Gynt, the worthless vagabond, at his mother's death-bed in the old hovel, frees her from the terrors of death and lulls her into certainty of heaven, as

she had been wont to lull him in childhood into sleep. The departing soul leaves the poor body hearing as its last delusion the squabble between Peer Gynt and St. Peter at heaven's gate and the deep bass voice of God announcing that she shall enter. So, scamp and blackguard as he is, he lies her into assurance of peace, and at a stroke rises above the heroic religiosity of Brand.

Just as Ibsen in Brand showed what must befall the man who puts the pietistic ideal of the age into acts as if it were real; so in Peer Gynt he showed the man acting the worldly ideal of the age as if it were real. The soul of the pushing, self-seeking, success-pursuing, wealth-pursuing hero of the man in the street stands shivering and naked.

Peer Gynt was published in November, on the eve of Ibsen's fortieth year. A second edition was called for a fortnight later.

It is clear that Ibsen regarded *Brand* and

Peer Gynt not as plays but as dramatic poems. He speaks of his "next" work being a play "for the theatre." And he adds: "*Peer Gynt* is not intended for the stage at all . . . . It is the antithesis of *Brand;* many consider it my best work . . . . It is wild and formless, written without regard to consequences." Thus we get, as always, Ibsen's keen sense of the fitness of the form to the idea. And with what consummate art he has here made the form fit the idea! The wild, wide-ranging poem is like a vast orchestration of the elements.

"They have discovered much more satire in it than was intended by me. Why cannot they read the book as a poem? As such I wrote it," he complains.

"This poem," he said, "contains much of my youth."

Petersen, as we have seen, an academic critic, attacked *Peer Gynt* as not conforming to acknowledged laws of art—declaring that it was not "real poetry." Ibsen was furious with

Byornsen for not "thrashing the life out of him." "Do not believe that I am a blind, conceited fool . . . . In my quiet moments I sound and probe and dissect my own inward parts . . . My book *is* poetry; and if it is not, then it will be. The conception of poetry in Norway shall be made to conform to the book. . . . . There is no stability in the world of ideas."

He bitterly resented Petersen's trying to make the characters into allegories.

Unfortunately, *Peer Gynt* led to the beginning of a breach with the great-hearted Byornsen. Parties in Norway were coming into sharp conflict. Byornsen, with wonted enthusiasm, rushed into the fight for national independence and government by the people. Ibsen was all for Scandinavian union. He had no sympathy with a peasant party.

The conservative-Right hailed *Peer Gynt* as a satire on the peasant-Left. This claiming of

him as the poet of a party caused Ibsen deep distress; it dragged his work to a lower level; and, whilst he was with the conservatives in some things, the radical demand for liberty was his very breath.

No man, said Ibsen, can think out a thought to its end without coming up against self-contradictions. Party was destructive to his philosophy of life; a poet has to "turn his back on all parties and take up a position for himself." He was "an enemy of the people," and detested to see Byornsen allied to the peasant-Left, who were without "an atom more of real liberalism" than the ultramontane peasantry of the Tyrol; and he grieved to see politics drawing Byornsen away from his high gifts of authorship. To Norway he would not now go —in a month, he said, he would either make an enemy of every one, or be creeping under disguise into their favour, and become a lie.

Byornsen wrote with contempt to Ibsen of his accepting honours and decorations.

Peer Gynt

Ibsen held that he and Byornsen lived under a monarchy—not under a republic, for which indeed he had no love. He reminded Byornsen that they had each "taken a salary from the state"—if they accepted money, why not decorations from those that desired to show them honour? If decorations were rejected, why not salaries, pensions, feasts?

Byornsen still clung to Christianity and he was grieved at Ibsen's "atheism."

Soon after the appearance of *Peer Gynt*, there was open breach between the two men, which was not patched up for many years.

Ibsen was now on the eve of forty. He had not yet written a single one of his great plays of modern life; was quite unknown outside Scandinavia; and had been before the Scandinavian public itself for only a year with his first success, *Brand*.

But he was about to find, in a young Dane, an ally who was destined to spread his reputation over Europe.

Ibsen

This year, on the heels of *Peer Gynt*, appeared George Brandes's "first impression" of Ibsen's art.

Ibsen had felt strongly drawn to the young fellow of twenty-four who in gallant fashion had attacked the philosophy of Rasmus Nielsen which tried to make religion and science "fit each other." Ibsen saw that Brandes would play a prominent part in the intellectual life of Scandinavia.

Brandes was at this time still under the load of Danish tradition in criticism which made for "artiness." He was with Petersen in his attitude to *Peer Gynt*, strongly condemned Ibsen's habit of "moralising," and attacked the poem as being "neither beautiful nor true."

Ibsen replied that he was wholly indifferent to aesthetic conventions; that ugliness, if it were full of character, was as valuable as beauty, "by virtue of its inherent truth."

Brandes was converted; and "got rid of all the prejudices which were due to education

and tradition." He was soon acclaiming Ibsen as "matchless leader," and spreading abroad the new conception of art which set up truthful human character-drawing as the first and highest quality of the drama.

We find Ibsen writing about this time to Hegel for a geography, a universal history, a history of Scandinavia, a book of natural history, an arithmetic, and the first books needed in religious instruction, for his small son. A significant list.

In the early summer of this his fortieth year, Ibsen left Italy most reluctantly and turned his face homewards. Dawdling through Florence and Southern Bavaria, he reached Munich in September. Here he enjoyed his work, the art treasures of the town, and the public hatred of Prussia, so hugely, that he broke his journey for a while.

All summer he had been planning a comedy in five acts, without writing anything. In

October he had sketched the complete outline, and finished the first act.

He ended by settling down in Dresden "for the winter"—the winter visit lengthened out into ten years, Ibsen being largely influenced by the advantages of schooling for his only son, and not a little by his strained relations with his fellow-countrymen in Norway.

Dresden he found a cheap and pleasant place to live in; went much to the theatre, which, though the best in Germany, he found to be in artistry far below that of Copenhagen; and was reading Brandes's *Aesthetical Studies*, a "real gold-mine" to him, especially his essays on the comic.

During the winter (1868-69) he wrote, "in a community well-ordered to weariness," his new play, *The League of Youth*. If, quoth Ibsen, it should be said of *Brand* and *Peer Gynt:* "Wine did this"; then it should be said of *The League of Youth*, "Sausages and beer did it." "In my comedy is the common order of

things—no strong emotions, nor deep feelings; no isolated thoughts."

With this play, Ibsen created an epoch in the drama of the north. The ordinary dialogue that had before baffled him, now came to him with ease. The phrasing is the phrasing of gossip—the speech the speech of every day.

This "peaceful work" is more artistically elaborated than any he had yet written. It is a comedy of intrigue in which he surpasses Scribe on his own ground. It is the *well-made play* with live people in it.

The aims that he set himself were that it should be "written in prose, which gives it a strong realistic colouring," and with "attention to form," and "without a single monologue; in fact, without a single aside."

It was a scalding satire upon the aspirations of the younger generation of statesmen.

In *The League of Youth* Ibsen gave the first prose comedy of modern life to the Nor-

wegian stage. He had made the attempt in *The Comedy of Love*, and had failed. In *The League of Youth*, laughter came to him, and he achieved true comedy. Every character is alive. All the fierce war of parties he found, on looking upon it serenely and from a distance, to be but the struggle for office—the things for which the parties wage war did not much matter. So he laughed at them all—Bratesberg, the chamberlain, an aristocrat of the old school, out of touch with the times—Lunestad, the country gentleman, who employs any means to his own ends that do not bring him into the grip of the law—Stensgaard, the lawyer, and Monsen, the parvenu landowner, fortune-hunters trying to rise in the world, Stensgaard by speeches, Monsen by swindling. Every one without any real interest but self.

In Stensgaard we have the man who falsely thinks he has a "call"—the humbug leader of men; the typical agitator of the day, boasting liberal sentiments to his own

aggrandisement, voluble in high-sounding aphorisms and picturesque phrases; a man of unbounded conceit, but vacillating in action; "instinct, character, will, and talents, each taking a different path—a frittered individuality," sentimental, vulgar. Craving for place and luxury; with but the scurviest sense of honour; instead of self-respect a gross self-confidence; without insight and without knowledge of his own powers or limitations; governed only by his impulses which he takes to be outside all disputing—he has never learnt to doubt himself. The slave of his own rhetoric and fine phrases, he has a blind belief that words are acts. Always indignant at acts of others which he has not hesitated to commit himself, he easily leads others astray since he leads himself astray. His vanity is as pronounced as his utter recklessness for the feelings of others. But his facile gift of speech, his ambition, vanity, and lack of honour, which might otherwise make him a

public danger, are rendered weak by his garrulousness and his transparency. He believes the talk of others as he believes his own gabble.

Stensgaard, smarting from the snub of a magnate, bursts into a radical outpouring of eloquence which is cheered by the liberal part of the community; he becomes drunk with the wine of success, and sees in himself a mighty leader of the people. Democracy is at his feet, his plaything—when he is asked to dinner by the magnate. In the magnate's drawing-room we next see him eloquently paying tribute to the man he had attacked. He decides now to get into Parliament, and marry into a rich and honourable family. Meanwhile this rich and luxurious house has opened its doors to him, and he will drink in beauty and sunshine and refinement, where are fine manners, life lived gracefully, comfortable chairs and carpets and ladies; bright and elegant conversations; no social blunders, no rudeness, no awkwardnesses. "Here I feel for the first time what

distinction means. Yes; we have indeed an aristocracy of culture; and to it I will belong."

The League of Youth was published in September (1869).

It was natural that a blind generation, and a sensitive one, should think that, in attacking liberal shams, liberalism was attacked.

The comedy was played for the first time in October. It created a wild disturbance. The crowded audience took sides, cheering and hissing. The second night saw a more serious riot—and when the lights were turned out, the tumult passed into the street. At the third performance the crowd was so great that the seats in the orchestra were sold.

The conservatives hailed the play as an attack on the liberals; the breach between Ibsen and Byornsen was widened. Byornsen spoke with anger of the "attempted assassination" of which Ibsen was guilty—the attempt to show the young party of liberty as a troop of ambitious phrasemongers, whose patriotism

lay in their talk. He also thought himself attacked.

Ibsen explained that it was a simple comedy, and nothing more. It did not portray actual persons. Models he used, "which are just as necessary for the comedy-writer as for the painter and sculptor. And Byornsen's pernicious and lie-steeped gang has served me as models."

In July a government grant had enabled Ibsen to go to Stockholm.

He was treated with great respect in the Swedish capital; and his stay was one great fête of two months. His mother died whilst he was at Stockholm. From the Swedish capital he went to Egypt as the guest of the Khedive to represent Norway at the opening of the Suez Canal. Here he received his first "decoration"; and the news of the stormy reception of his play. He was deeply wounded at the play being dragged in-

to the political warfare! But the gentleman protests too much. He wounds—and is afraid to own that he has struck the blow.

In December he was back again in Dresden. Ibsen was now living a "comfortable and care-free life"; and was looking forward to taking up his Roman play of *Julian* again.

X.

Ibsen had written two of his three dramatic poems, when, in *The League of Youth*, he came in sight of his promised land—the modern prose drama. For a while he hesitated as to which path to follow, Romanticism or Realism; he turned back for the last time to romanticism in the great double-drama of the *Emperor Julian*.

That Ibsen fretted at the loss of Byornsen's friendship he showed more than once. In 1870 he secured the rights of *The Pretenders* for Hegel; and "though direct diplomatic relations are broken off between us," he was prevented from dedicating the book to Byornsen only

by an affront from Byornsen's friends in the press. Intrigues were again set on foot to prevent Byornsen from getting the management of his old theatre by offering it to Ibsen, who sternly nipped the ugly business in the bud and further wrote that Byornsen was the proper man.

Ibsen was at Dresden during the war between France and Prussia. It made so profound an impression upon him, that his art was completely silenced. During this idleness he formed a new estimate of Germany. Her discipline was a wonder to him—to it he saw that her victory and unity were due. The vision of the stupendous power in man, to achieve his goals, that lies in a nation's discipline, was never wiped out of his memory.

In 1870 France lay humiliated, mutilated—her prestige gone, her very existence a question, bleeding and bewildered under the heel of Germany. Ibsen, whose heart was with France, saw only the salvation of France

through her scourging; saw in her fall her dead conventions come toppling down; a new people arising, shed of much that by suffering only they could shed. The country had been living upon the crumbs of the Revolution, on "food from which the nourishment has long been chewed . . . Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity are no longer the things they were in the days of the late lamented Guillotine . . . That is what politicians will not understand—and therefore I hate them . . . What is really wanted is a revolution of the spirit of man."

In December he wrote his well-known poem, *A Balloon Letter*. But in those stirring times he could not set to work "on anything very deep."

Bismarck bore testimony to the Commune that "a grain of sound sense" lurked in the effort. Ibsen watched the Commune with keener eyes. "It has a sound kernel; that I see clearly; and some day it will be put into practice without any caricature." The conserva-

tive-Right must have been alarmed at their poet.

Ibsen was in the Danish capital in the autumn of 1870; and was received, as he had been in the Swedish, with great respect.

As Ibsen had helped Brandes to rid himself of academic canons of criticism, so, now, Brandes in his *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* strongly influenced Ibsen. "No more dangerous book could fall into the hands of a pregnant poet," writes Ibsen. He was strongly moved by the Dane's revolt against existing conditions of life, his passion for liberty, and his assaults on the prejudices of society—such as its attitude to suicide and "unlawful love."

To Ibsen, "it places a yawning gulf between yesterday and to-day." The book gave Ibsen added strength at just that critical moment when he was about to devote all his powers to the drama of modern society. And Brandes followed him step by step, his de-

fender and interpreter to the world—his enemies even said his jackal.

In the spring of 1872, Edmund Gosse introduced Ibsen into England; and Siebold, a commercial traveller of Cassel, into Germany, by his translation of *Brand;* Strodtmann's *The Pretenders* and *The League of Youth* closely followed.

In the autumn, Byornsen's call to Denmark, to give up all thought of revenge, roused Ibsen's anger, and drew his wrathful attack on Byornsen in the poem in which he called him "weather-cock." Byornsen passed through Munich at the end of the year without going to see him.

But between Ibsen and Brandes the friendship was now close-knit for life, in spite of Brandes's constant and hotly expressed irritation on occasion at Ibsen's sluggish habits in answering letters—there is indeed something quaint in the schoolboy penitence of Ibsen at the other's onslaught. But these two original

men, obstinate and independent and combative, understood each other well; and that understanding of him was more to Ibsen than praise.

The world, for Ibsen, was now a very different place. He was a force in Scandinavia. The publication of a work by him was an event wherever his language was spoken; and his sales were such as to ease the burden of living.

He turned to his great double-drama again. It was to be his "chief work." It was to hold "that positive theory of life which my critics have so long demanded of me." It grew enormously, during its writing, from his original plan. New ideas came to him as he wrote—and a vaster and deeper survey of life. The huge drama is the last of three dramatic poems. It was an accident that *The League of Youth* came between; for it belongs to, and is the stepping-stone to, the great series of modern plays which he is about to give to the world.

Emperor and Galilean

He called his huge, historic, dramatic poem a "world-drama," because of its universality. It "deals with a struggle between two irreconcilable powers in the life of the world—a struggle which will always repeat itself."

He begs for books giving facts of Julian's life. "Facts are what I need . . . Argumentative folly I can furnish myself."

During four years in Rome he had studied the period, and made notes of it; but had evolved no distinct plan or plot, much less written a word of the drama. "I was still a Scandinavian, and could not fit myself to the alien subject. Then came the experience of Germany's great events—I was there during the war and her consequent development." His theory of history and human life, which had been a national one, had now expanded into a racial one—he had become a Teuton—then, "I could write. *Emperor and Galilean.*" It was his first book written under German intellectual influence.

Ibsen

Ibsen found it a "Herculean labour," not so much in the writing as in the immense amount of research he spent upon it. In his facts he "adhered very close to history." He gave the period new life. "I have seen everything happen, as it were, before my eyes." But the huge play also marks an enormous development in Ibsen's life. In the character of Julian, "as in most of what he had written in his ripe years," there was much more of his own inner life than he would have cared to acknowledge to the public. At the same time he tried to see the characters in the atmosphere of their own age.

Emperor ana Galilean is "a part of my own spiritual life," he writes—it is "what I have gone through myself," and "the historical subject chosen has a much more intimate connection with the movements of our time than one might at first imagine." Such a connection Ibsen regarded as "imperative in any modern poetical treatment of such a remote subject, if it is to arouse interest at all."

Emperor and Galilean

At the New Year of 1871, the first part of *Julian* was finished; and he hoped to have all three parts done in June.

He was now busy collecting his poems for a complete edition, for which he was to receive "a big price." Brandes was very ill this year; but Ibsen would have no talk of danger—"one does not die in the first act." In July he and Brandes met for the first time—at Dresden.

All summer he was hard at work upon *Emperor Julian.* It took all his thought and time. At the end of the year he had completed Part First in three acts—*Julian and the Philosophers.*

In 1872 he had to take legal action against the piratical publisher Jensen, whose stock of *The Vikings* and *Lady Inger* was seized and destroyed. In the April of this year, in *The Spectator*, Edmund Gosse introduced Ibsen to the English public; and gave him the great delight of having taken the first step in realising one of his "fondest literary dreams."

The summer he spent in the Bavarian Tyrol at work upon *Julian*. In August he had finished the Second Part of the Trilogy. First Part—*Julian and the Philosophers* in three acts; Second Part—*Julian's Apostasy* in three acts; Third Part, *Julian on the Imperial Throne*, to be in five acts.

He was filled with contempt at this time for the organisers of the thousandth anniversary of the kingdom of Norway, who, having asked him for a poem, had not the courage to have it read out, but distributed it "like a hawker's ballad," because it used phrases against the party in power. "People," said he, "who permit . . . Byornsen to be at large, deserve to be shut up themselves." Ibsen was a quaint soul.

Back in Dresden for the winter, he was delighted to read of articles upon him that were now coming out in the English press.

In the February of 1873 he could announce to Hegel that *Emperor and Galilean*, a World-Drama in Two Parts, was finished. Part One—

Emperor and Galilean

Caesar's Apostasy, a play in five acts; Part Two—*Emperor Julian*, a play in five acts.

The action of *Julian's Apostasy* opens at Constantinople. A great throng is waiting to see the Emperor, Constantius the Second, go to mass. A fierce quarrel arises between different sections of the decaying faith of Christendom. Constantius passes, with his courtiers—amongst them his kinsman Julian, whose parents he has murdered. . . .

Julian feels the call upon him to found an empire—feels that the Will which orders all things has chosen him. From childhood he has won disciples to the Galilean and converted many. But he grows disgusted with their weakness and half-heartedness, weary of their hypocrisies, bad faith, and meanness. He sees that the worship of the Galilean is a blind worship as of gods of stone—that the Galilean's deepest sayings none try to act upon.

He goes to Athens to meet Libanios, the

teacher of the new school, who is trying to restore the old gods. He finds nothing but bestial excess—realises that the old gods, Venus and the rest, are dead—realises also that for him Christ has ceased to exist. "The old beauty is no longer beautiful, and the new truth is no longer true."

He goes to Ephesus in search of a new creed. Here he comes under the spell of Maximos the Mystic. In the midst of the wildest excitement of incantation, messengers break in upon him with the news that his brother, Caesar Gallos, has been murdered, that Julian is nominated Caesar, and that the Emperor has given him his sister Helena as wife. . . .

Julian, having won a great victory at Argentoratum in Gaul, returns to Helena in Lutetia—a messenger from the Emperor arriving at the same time with presents of fruit. Helena eats some of the peaches and is poisoned—confessing in her frenzied agony that she has been unfaithful to Julian with, amongst others,

a Christian priest. Fearing treachery, Julian leaps down amongst the soldiery; is elected Emperor; and marches for Constantinople. The baseness of the priest has added the last drop of bitterness to Julian's hatred of the Christians; and on the march he publicly worships Helios.

Maximos the Mystic tries to show Julian the way to the "third empire." Maximos warns him that his choice does not lie between the old Paganism and Christianity—there is no bringing back the old gods, the "first empire" of sensualism, to the people—and the "second empire" of self-denial that was the ideal of Christendom is already dying—the "third empire," in which the spirit of man shall be free of denials, his body free from the starving of the ascetic denial of life, and his will rid of the torture of being baffled at every turn, is that which is to rule the world. Not on Olympus, nor on the Cross, but in himself is God. Julian's choice lies not between the old gods

and the Galilean, but between both of these and Julian himself.

But in *Julian the Emperor*, Julian, enthroned, essays to revive the old gods amongst the people—and, as Maximos warned him, in vain. And all the more in vain since he tries to do so by harsh compelling of the outward homage of ritual.

At times, in his clearer broodings, he nearly grasps the meaning of Maximos; but superstition, tradition, and vanity befog his vision. So, instead of setting aside and ignoring the old pagan gods and the Galilean, and making himself the head of the "third empire," he makes the Galilean a rival god—an enemy to be attacked.

Julian, by his persecution of his Christian subjects, becomes the Awakener of Christianity from the dead. By changing Christianity from a state-religion into a persecuted and oppressed faith, he restores to it its courageous

spirit and its fearlessness of martyrdom—he gives the Galileans back their enthusiasm and strength to suffer for their faith, raises them from apathy, rids them of feebleness, and makes them set aside dissensions.

Defied by the Galileans, he punishes them with vigorous severity. It has the effect for which he least reckoned. His fellow-student Gregory, a man without power or ability for more than the care of his family, a man without courage or initiative or habit or decisive action, and his fellow-student Basilios, a man given to the student's unfruitful studies of dead things, both arise, spurred by dangers; and, strengthened and chastened by persecution, stand across his path—ordinary men no longer, but with the courage of lions.

He asks Maximos: Who shall conquer, the emperor or the Galilean?

And the seer tries again to illumine him. Both shall fall; the right man will come and swallow up both emperor and Galilean; but

you shall not therefore perish. The child gives place to the youth; the youth to the man; yet neither perishes. You have done wrong—you have tried to make the youth of the world into the child again, the empire of the spirit subject to the empire of the flesh. You have striven to hinder the youth from growing into the man. You who would rule the "third empire" have drawn the sword against it—you have given strength to the "second empire" again by setting it up as an enemy and persecuting it.

Julian asks who shall rule the "third empire"; and the seer answers: "The man who *wills.*"

Julian embarks on his fatal march to Persia. His figure gains something of dignity again, once he rouses to action—and this in spite of his dirty habits of body, the ink-stained fingers, the verminous beard. The great dreamer and mighty warrior rises above all,

calm, resolute, but baffled by the indifference of the world to his creed. His persecutions have made the Galileans strong again; but no passion burns in the hearts of the worshippers of Pan.

He burns his ships; longs even to die, that he may become a god; passionately insists on his own divinity.

It is found that the Persian refugee, on whose information he has burnt his ships, has fled the camp—a spy.

The Persian army rushes at midnight upon the camp. Julian vows a sacrifice to the gods.

"To what gods?" asks Maximos.

"To many," cries Julian—showing his unbelief in himself. "One or other must hear me. *I must call on something outside of and above me.*"

He leaps to horse, and is soon in the forefront of battle. The oracle has said that he need never fear defeat except on Phrygian ground. But as the day dawns, looking eastwards he sees the figure of the Galilean, robed in the purple of empire, amidst the ranks of the

enemy. He plunges into the fight, and rushes madly to reach him, when he is wounded in the side, in the name of Christ, by one of his own men; and he falls. The Christian general Jovian calls on the Christian legions to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's; the pagan legions also close up and follow Jovian, and the hosts of the enemy are scattered.

As Julian lies dying, he sees that his attempt to restore amongst men the gods that have been tried and found wanting, and flung from the temples of men, has been a fool's task. He had nothing new to give—nothing better than the empire of the Galilean.

"Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

He learns, as the end comes, that the place where he has been struck down is called "the Phrygian region." He bows to "a mysterious power outside us, which largely governs the issue of human adventure." He sees that a mightier will than his has struck him down. "*The world-will has laid an ambush for me.*"

So Maximos sees that whilst he rightly counselled Julian to rebel against asceticism, he was unable to do what alone can be done by the Emperor of the third empire for himself —the Emperor-God can only be self-begotten by willing.

In *Brand* we see a man of heroic essence try to make the religious ideal of the day into a reality by acting it—and fail. In *Peer Gynt* we see a man try to make the worldly ideal of the day, selfishness, into a reality by acting it —and fail. In *Emperor and Galilean*, a man of heroic essence tries to replace the enfeebled religious ideal of the day with a past religious ideal—and fails.

Ibsen looks on the world as bad; the state is rotten to the core, and must always be rotten. He feels no compassion for the human race. The only hope for man is to be true and free. He has no sympathy with suffering—he glories in suffering—for, only through suf-

fering can the miserable, petty thing called man become great. Only through struggle, through defeat, through punishment, can communities of men become healthy and strong. Adversity braces; bitter experience makes wholesome, as fire rids the gold of dross; oppression and pain arouse heroism.

Here again, as in *Brand*, the readiness for martyrdom is made the test of truth. But we have also Ibsen's fully grown belief in Schopenhaur's unconscious and irresistible universal Will. The Evolution makes him look to the coming of a Third Kingdom in which Christianity, having absorbed paganism, will in turn be absorbed. And, as always with Ibsen, we have struggle glorified—not reconciliation and harmony.

To Ibsen, a belief in a "call" goes hand in hand with the need for self-sacrifice to obey that call. Self-sacrifice is not only demanded of the Elect—it is the privilege of the Elect. He who is called to great achievement in the

world must sacrifice self-interest. The world glorifies a martyr because he sacrifices himself for the good of others; Ibsen glories in the sacrifice for itself—because of its purifying force. It proves that life and right are on the side of him who sacrifices.

Julian realises at last that the pagan empire for which he is fighting is but a dead thing, since it cannot produce martyrs—a cause for which none will sacrifice all is doomed.

"When the Emperor Julian stood at the end of his mortal career, all round him crumbling into ruin, nothing so crushed his spirit as the thought that all that was left to him was the respectful memory in which he was held by certain wise heads, whilst his adversary was rich in the love of warm human hearts."

"In the course of my occupation with *Julian*," said Ibsen, "I have in a way become a fatalist." But in this play he is a mystic fatalist for the last time—after this his belief in a "call" is founded on natural vocation.

Edmund Gosse has said of this drama that it ought to have been written in verse; but Ibsen, with far deeper sense of poetry, knew that in prose is as much poetry as in verse. Poetry is in the emotional statement, not in the juggling with rhymes. A half-naked god with a lyre in his hand has always misled and bewildered the academies in their concept of what is the poetic.

Brandes had written to Ibsen that he ought to raise a banner; to which Ibsen replied that "Louis Napoleon landed at Boulogne with an eagle on his head. Later, when the hour of his destiny struck, he needed no eagle."

The King, at his coronation, made Ibsen a Knight of St. Olaf. Ibsen would have valued the distinction more if Byornsen had been included in the honour; but saw that Byornsen had himself made it impossible.

In the summer of 1873 Ibsen was in Vienna for a while as one of the art-jurors.

He had an European eye that watched all the events of his day. He is struck with wonder at "the craze in Renan's France for pilgrimage."

It was in this year that he persuaded Grieg to compose the music for the stage edition of *Peer Gynt.*

Ibsen twice broke his twenty-seven years' exile—the first time in 1874, on the eve of his great dramatic career in modern plays. He was delighted to find that every one received him "with remarkable friendliness," and that all displeasure with him had vanished. But great as had been his longing for home, he was seized with no urging to settle in Norway. As he sailed up the fiord, a weight settled upon him, and lasted during his whole stay. "I was no longer myself beneath the gaze of those cold, uncomprehending, Norwegian eyes at the windows and in the streets." But he had won recognition. On his appearance at the theatre, to see *The League of Youth*, the

whole house rose and burst into enthusiastic applause. In a speech to the students, he made his famous confession: "A poet is by nature long-sighted. Never have I seen my homeland and its life so distinctly, so clearly, so closely, or in such relief as when furthest sundered from it."

In 1875 Byornsen began his dramatic treatment of the problems of modern life.

In April Ibsen moved from Dresden to Munich to give better education to his lad Sigurd.

In June, 1876, thanks to the Meiningen players and the efforts of his friends, Ibsen's tragedies, *The Pretenders* and *The Vikings at Helgeland*, were played on the German stage. They attracted little attention; though Ibsen was called before the curtain several times, and received an Order soon afterwards. They did not strike a particularly new note for Germany, neither as a subject nor as to startling originality in artistic treatment.

This year saw Ibsen's first play translated into English—*Emperor and Galilean.*

XI.

After a silence of four years, Ibsen, at forty-five, had given forth the immense double-drama of *Emperor and Galilean* in prose. He followed the titanic work with another four years of silence; but when on the edge of fifty he again gave tongue, he had chosen once for all his life's work. When he laid down the pen on the last sheet of *Emperor and Galilean*, he stripped himself of saga and history and legend, and stepped straightway into his kingdom.

He was done with the past.

He looked now upon the world that lay before him; and he saw everywhere, as he had seen in his own Norway, the vast gulf that lay not only between men's words and their deeds, but between the words of nations and their deeds. The world seemed rotten to the core; and his one hope had lain in the better time to come.

At the root of all the evil was lack of individuality.

Ibsen

Ibsen had been grievously disappointed at the failure of the Commune in Paris. He had believed the "Third Empire" to be at hand; and he slowly awakened to the fact that, instead, Europe was entering on her new voyage with the corpse of the Past as ballast-freight. He forthwith put aside his belief in the near coming of the Third Empire, and settled down to examine the value of this freight—set to work to dissect the body of modern society—which was, to Ibsen, only another word for examining its diseases.

It is significant how at one he is with the Russian anarchist, Prince Krapotkine, as to the hypocrisy of modern society. We say that we are to love our neighbours as ourselves; but let a child take off its jacket and give it to a shivering, unknown beggar child, and its mother will whip it for obeying the word that she teaches its lips to utter. The priest would point out that if he obeyed this, the fundamental law of his faith which he gives forth

from God's high altar on every holy day, he would have to go naked, and the misery be still about him. The preacher says that to work is to pray; but we do our best to make others work for us. We are told not to lie; but politics are a huge lie. We and our children live in this double-faced morality, a sheer hypocrisy; we do not say this morality is a lie and shall not be; we defend it with sophistry. The very basis of our life is hypocrisy and sophistry. But morality cannot be where immoralities are its acts and deeds. If we have a lip-morality, a morality that we cannot make a morality in acts—then society cannot live on such a morality; things cannot continue so; there must and will be a change.

It is against this lying morality of modern society that Ibsen directs his sequence of modern plays.

He takes what are considered respectable and praiseworthy men in society, no blunderers and stage-villains, but those who pass as

being reputable citizens and honest men; and he strips them of their fine clothes, and shows their souls naked to the world, self-seeking and contemptible.

Ibsen now, on the threshold of fifty, surveys his past work, winnows it, rewrites some of it.

He is becoming widely known wheresoever his tongue is spoken. For the last five years, many of his early works being out of print, he had been setting his stern self-criticism upon his achievement before again giving it to this larger audience.

With increase of art, Ibsen's style had been steadily developing from early influences, through ventures in precious phrasing and the like aesthetic qualities, towards clarity and simplicity of statement. And as he gave forth each of his early works again to the world, he cut and rewrote ruthlessly, always with simplification in view, adding directness and picturesqueness to his adjectives, and clearness to

his phrasing—always changing what he did change in order to get greater vividness. Vigour, compactness, and more telling qualities replace phrase-mongering and tricks of thumb, in order to make the statement leap at once into the senses. With his lyrics he was particularly ruthless—selecting, destroying, rewriting.

And now *The League of Youth* had shown him the way into the promised land. He was done with the historical drama for ever. The drama of modern life, of daily life, was in its birth-throes. With a splendid artistry for the utterance of it, he was about to paint living pictures of the life of his day.

Heretofore he had tested the "heroism" of heroic figures—men who set themselves to go through the full logical adventures of realising the ideal that they have made their god. Henceforth he takes the ordinary man, the citizen, the man of everyday life and in everyday surroundings, and tests the value of his conventional ideals.

He has done with rhyming tragedies and all the bygone trappings of the stage. His one aim is to place upon the stage a convincingly real picture of modern life. From the stage he banishes every trick that takes the mind away from the illusion of reality.

He is about to embark on a new phase of his art, an achievement that is to make him the greatest playwright of his age, and win him an European reputation, with the parish of Norway for his scene and background, and the voice of the parish of Norway the voice for the utterance of his great gifts.

Every two years we shall see him bring forth a great modern prose-drama in a series of plays that are to revolutionise the theatre of the world.

XII.

In the autumn of 1876, Ibsen was in the Bavarian Tyrol again, his mind busy with the conception of a long drama. Back in Munich again in

October, he soon had the first act written. He decided to call the play *The Pillars of Society*, and to write it in five acts. It was to be a counterpart to *The League of Youth;* and was to enter into several of the more important questions of the day.

In *The Pillars of Society* Ibsen struck a blow at the leading classes.

Byornsen had written the modern social drama for two years, when Ibsen, after his first effort in *The League of Youth*, opened his assault upon existing society with staggering force in this play; and laid the foundations for his solid reputation as the greatest of modern playwrights.

Consul Bernick, the most important and most respected man in the town, is a merchant, who is always to the forefront in any public movement—a great benefactor to the place, which bristles with his charities and gifts. He is a pillar of society. But greed and self-interest are at the back of all he does—his gifts

to the town are to gain power and place, his support of public undertakings is to increase his wealth. But society looks for high-flown words; so he and his fellows use big words to garnish their paltry motives.

Here Ibsen particularly lashes at the self-complacent hypocrisy of "little places." Norway, shocked at the Paris Commune and its attack on the established order of things, preened herself on being, with much "God-be-praised," a small people with foot planted on a firmer moral soil, a healthy community uncontaminated by modern unrest. But Ibsen stabbed at the heart of her self-complacency by showing that there was more lying and deceit in a small than in a large people—the smaller the people, the less free was the individual, the more fettered were his attempts to be free. And Consul Bernick, who is so indignant at American ship-owners sending unworthy ships to sea, does this very same thing himself to keep the good opinion of his little parish—only

being horrified when he finds his own son is aboard.

Now it so happens that our worthy consul had had a love-affair with a married actress; and a daughter had come of the affair. The husband, coming home unexpectedly, sees a man with her—this man jumps out into the street—there is a fuss. That man is the consul; but his young brother-in-law, a bachelor, takes Bernick's blame upon himself, and goes off to America. There goes with him his elder half-sister, Lona, who detests the narrow life of the place. This girl the consul had jilted for her richer sister.

Mrs. Bernick's young brother John being gone to America, the consul puts the blame upon the absent man; takes the girl-child, Dina, into his own home with much show of great-heartedness; also, to account for some heavy money-losses entailed by his firm, with a sad sigh gives it out that the young fellow has taken it.

The play opens with the girl, Dina, grown up and at war with the respectable ideals of the whole community, which, out of its "goodness" and righteousness, snubs her for the sins of her forebears—even the schoolmaster to whom she is engaged to be married does not shrink from showing his condescension in marrying her. She pines to get away to America, where she hears that people are not good.

The bomb falls.

The man who bears the consul's sin comes back from America, with the outspoken Lona, on a visit. Our worthy consul is at his wits' ends. It looks as if he must cease to "hold up the banner of the ideal."

The whole town, of course, is scandalised at the consul and his household being seen with the erring John. And, further, to embarass affairs, John falls in love with the girl who is said to be his daughter! John decides to go back to America and chooses the unseaworthy

vessel for his voyage; but the consul's murderous scheme to keep up the banner of the ideal, by letting him ship aboard her, is evaded, by the young fellow at the last moment changing to another ship. A torchlight procession in the consul's honour is just arriving at the house when Lona has nearly persuaded the consul to be done with lies and hypocrisies; suddenly news comes that his little son Olaf has hidden aboard the unseaworthy vessel as a stowaway, to be with Uncle John. In a frenzy of agony, Bernick is as suddenly relieved to hear that the boy has been discovered and brought back; and as the procession arrives he goes out and makes a clean breast of his villainies to the townspeople. The curtain comes down as the consul pronounces that Truth and Freedom are the real Pillars of Society—Truth that does not shrink from all the facts, and Freedom from the hypocrisies that are the cloak of respectability.

Ibsen

Ibsen still fears the full flight of his wings. He has the melodramatic ending—the smoothing away of what is horrible—the toning down of the bad.

We shall soon see Ibsen writing another play to show that the blurting out of facts, in and out of season, is not necessary to truth—that to hold the tongue is also a morality.

Into this play steps one of the most tender of all Ibsen's created women, Martha, the sister of the consul—so exquisite, so pure, so sane a woman is she, that it would seem as if the violets must spring from the earth where her feet have touched.

Here Ibsen takes middle-class society, with its claim to respectability, and shows it to be not only a tyranny but an hypocrisy, and a cruel one—shows the men who come to great riches generally to be dishonest men, who, when they jabber "imperial" talk about giving a railway to the people, so far from not being self-interested in the profit that will ensue, often secretly and in large part benefit thereby.

The Pillars of Society

The Pillars of Society appeared in the October of 1877.

The book was a pronounced success; but in Norway the play had not the effect that Ibsen expected.

In Germany, however, it made him. *The Pillars of Society* sprang at once into that popularity on the German stage which it still holds.

He became a force in German art. The comedy was played not only in Berlin, but in other large cities. Ibsen stepped into Europe.

Young Germany gave him no stinted praise. "We found our aesthetic creed. . . . Our young eyes were opened by it to all the theatric artificiality of the day. We trembled with joy." They sat all day reading bad translations of it. Even the harsh, unpoetic German of these things could not kill the power of it. It determined German dramatic taste. Here was a poet who had the strength and courage to face the questions of the day. "We felt our-

selves for the first time in the presence of fictitious characters of our own age in whom we could believe." New ideals of liberty and truth began to emerge victoriously from the theatre.

It raised enemies also. Germany took sides.

This also was the play that, three years later, introduced Ibsen to the English theatre.

In September, before *The Pillars of Society* was given to the world, Ibsen was in Stockholm.

In November, the month after it appeared, Ibsen's father died. Ibsen wrote to his uncle, Christian Paus, his father's half-brother and cousin to his mother, a man who had been twice elected to the Storthing, thanking him for his care of his parents, and explaining that his own career had been a hard uphill struggle until quite recently, and that his chief reason for not writing home had been his inability to help. "It seemed idle to write, when I could not act."

It was about this time that Byornsen, after a fierce struggle, finally gave up the Christian faith. From thenceforth, to him as to Ibsen, the highest aim and the greatest good were freedom of thought and the personal quest for truth; it was on the last day of the October of this year that he made his famous charge to the Christiania students: "Be in truth."

Ibsen made an effort to renew the friendship with Byornsen, who had expressed generous approval of Brandes's critical estimate of Ibsen.

Byornsen's praise of an opponent atoned in Ibsen's affection for much; and he sent, in the October of this year, through Hegel, to Byornsen, a copy of *The Pillars of Society* with a letter. Though the act led to no immediate result, the two men were steadily coming together again in their work.

XIII.

Ibsen followed *The Pillars of Society* with giant stride in his art's increase.

In the autumn of 1878, his fiftieth year, he went to Rome for a twelvemonth. Here he bought a collection of paintings by old masters which were a great joy to him. Paradoxical as always, the academic in painting seems to have held his homage; there is little sign of his support of the living painters of his own day, though he condemned the modern subservience to the dead men.

In the spring of 1879, his lad was at the University of Rome. He himself was preparing to write a new dramatic work in the summer. In September, at Amalfi, he had completed the play.

It was *A Doll's House.*

In *The Pillars of Society* we have the respectable citizen unmasked in relation to his fellow-citizens; in *A Doll's House* we have the respectable citizen unmasked in relation to his wife.

A Doll's House

Helmer, a young lawyer, is a man of refinement and culture, and respected by the town—a truthful, honourable man, so strict in his commercial honour that he will not borrow lest he should die before he can pay back the debt. But to his young wife he is a tyrant—and a brutally selfish one. Nora must be his toy, his utter slave; pander to all his whims; live only for him; think only what he thinks, believe only what he believes. It is the ordinary man's usurpation of his wife's individuality that Peer Gynt demands of his mistress Anitra, the dancing girl—that he shall take the place of her soul.

Up till now it had been the mission of woman to be the self-sacrificing soul who purifies the man, sits patiently at home to welcome the sinner and to pardon the sins; she was to be the helper of man, his comforter, his nurse. When man stumbled in the path of rectitude, she held out a hand to bring him back to the right way.

Nora is the "thorough woman" of conven-

tion—the type that the Helmers gurgle about as being the "womanly woman." She does not even ask to be herself; she has the unlimited instinct for self-sacrifice. She does not attempt an individual life; she is but a doll, a pretty chattel. Her will, her very conscience, are in her husband's keeping. She lives in a state of infancy in the law; thinks like a child; is content to be treated as a child. Her individuality withers for lack of use. Her will and conscience are stunted from lack of habit. The sweets which she has been forbidden to eat she cannot resist. She eats macaroons, prettily denying the fact even as she eats. She lies with airy ease; she knows how to get what she wants from men by coquetry; but she has a good heart, her aims are good, and she is without sense of guilt. She is as irresponsible as a child. She has the most serene confidence in her worthy husband; and is convinced that he would protect her reputation with his life.

All goes well enough for the husband as long

as she adores him, admires him, trusts him implicitly.

Self-sacrifice has been drummed into her head as the womanly ideal. Suddenly she is called upon to give a moral judgment; she has none to give. But she knows that self-sacrifice should be her heroic aim. The interests of the man whom she loves dominate all else. Her husband is ordered change of climate—his life depends upon it. He has not the money. She knows that he will not borrow it. So *she* borrows it, from a money-lender who insists on her father's signature. Her father is dying; she writes his name instead—she can easily redeem the bond. She sacrifices herself.

When the play opens, Nora is working off the money she has recently borrowed with a forged name from the money-lender. Helmer is suddenly made manager of a bank. The money-lender, eager to get employment in the bank, discloses to Nora his hold over her, asking as the price of secrecy that she shall sup-

port his appointment. She makes no secret of her contempt for the shabby rogue; at the same time repudiating any harm in using her father's name. But her next experience makes her uneasy. Her husband sternly expresses his contempt for a forgery committed by the money-lender himself. It opens her eyes to the judgment of the outside world upon such matters. And her awakening is made more rude by his remark that dishonesty nearly always comes from dishonest mothers. Startled, she sees that all her tender delight in her children is not enough to fit her for motherhood.

She decides to raise the rest of the money at once, and redeem her bill from the money-lender. But how? She will borrow it from a friend. She knows that she can wheedle what she wants from her husband by working him into an amorous mood. She employs the same method on his friend. The man startles her by avowing his passion for her. She realises, as at a flash, the source of her power at home.

She awakes to the fact that she has done a criminal thing; and decides to destroy herself rather than allow her husband to ruin his career by shielding her and taking the blame of the forgery upon himself, as she feels sure he will. To her utter bewilderment, instead of shielding her by self-sacrifice on hearing of the forgery, he not only does not think of shielding her, but bursts into angry abuse of her. She now finds that self-sacrifice is no longer praiseworthy. She cannot believe that what she has done is a crime. She would cheerfully do it again if necessary to save his life. And to Helmer's indignant remark, "No man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves," she makes the profound reply: "Millions of women have done so."

Through his fuming and storming, there is slowly revealed to her, as he really is, the man for whom she has been ready to sacrifice herself; nay, for whom she has already sacrificed so much of her young life and her entity. She

sees that she must either surrender herself, her individuality, her identity—or she must win it back.

It dawns upon her that their home has been but a doll's house.

The heroic essence in her makes her decide that, to be a mother of real men, to be a real woman, she must win back her individuality from this awful make-believe.

Marriage must not be a degradation. Beneath such marriage is the worst form of tyranny—utter ruin of freedom and truth. There can be no true marriage where the man is everything, the wife nothing. Such marriage must make the children grow up with contempt for the mother.

She leaves the home to go out and find herself, and to become an entity, before she is fit to bring up her children—fit to take her proper place in the world.

Does she come back at last?

Ibsen, sphinx-like, answers the question

with a shrug: "I wonder." In *A Doll's House* Ibsen first stated with clear voice the right of the woman to her individuality—the woman's right, as much as the man's, to freedom and truth—that woman has a duty to be an independent human being, not merely a wife and mother.

Until now he had passed by the right of the woman to her individuality with at most a hint that he suspected she had a right. Up to this time he had but seen her highest duty from the conventional romantic standpoint—that woman's province is her enthusiasm for the achievements of man; and her greatest virtue her readiness to sacrifice herself for the man. Love, that sacrifices all without thought of return, has been the essence of his womanhood. "To love—to sacrifice all—to be forgotten. That is woman's saga." Indeed, when Ibsen entered upon his artistic career, woman's emancipation was far from a pleasing conception to him. He had, at first, small sympathy

with women. He always, to the end, found more pleasure in the talk of men than of women.

But, to Ibsen, with his supreme test of all human greatness—the readiness to sacrifice himself for one's ideal—it was inevitable that he should one day open his eyes to the fact that women, more than men, put themselves to the test that proves grandeur. It is indeed for this reason that his women always have something of nobility in them as against the general ignobleness of his men. He is ever for women a very knight of chivalry. It was inevitable that he should one day test the woman against the man—as inevitable that he should see that her self-sacrifice for him was not her highest function. He saw that the noblest type of woman could not be a parasite who sells her soul to a man for bread and keep.

And he saw that, whilst the most conventional men were forever talking of the sacredness of the home, and of home being the wom-

an's sphere, they were really far more interested in the women of genius who had the courage to live their own life.

With Ibsen the independence of the individual is the all—in marriage as in friendship. So Nora awakes to the fact that duty to husband and children is not the most sacred duty —the more sacred duty is to herself. In solitary grandeur she sets herself against society. Again we have the typical isolation—the inevitable struggle against the tyranny of society.

A Doll's House brought Ibsen into that wide and fearsome notoriety that is associated with his name. When *A Doll's House* appeared in 1879, it had an unprecedented success in Scandinavia; and the play increased Ibsen's repute in Germany. It caused violent dispute; and was attacked as "immoral." His allies became aggressive; his enemies sullen.

The play had an astounding effect—alarm-

ing society, which for generations had accepted marriage based upon love to be a heaven of bliss.

Ibsen makes the husband faithful, respectable, honourable, scrupulous, upright, a good father, a kindly gentleman—he concedes him every advantage—yet, even so, he shows his marriage to be a mean and contemptible tyranny, a hollow deception.

Philistia stood agasp.

That the play was attacked was largely due to the fact that it hopelessly bewildered the conventional man. We see this when we read the criticism of so able a conventional man as Max Nordau, who utterly misses the whole plot and its significance.

Nordau attacked Nora as being a liar, a flirt, and a forger. Exactly. So says Ibsen. But the whole point is that the conventional husband not only makes her so by destroying her will, but is complacent to the weaknesses that breed these vices—that conventional life, by

taking her individuality from her, makes her into the weakling that the husband admires. It is when she tries to be a real woman, tries to be strong and noble in herself and capable, that her husband turns upon her, and Nordau with him, because she has no training to fall back upon but the parasitical upbringing that has made her what she is—a doll and plaything, ignorant of strength, and of the self-respect that makes strong.

The man in the street was baffled. For if egoism, said he, be a virtue in the woman, it cannot be the vice in the husband which Ibsen so forcibly condemns. But Ibsen does not condemn individuality in the man—he condemns the man for forcing his individuality upon the woman. The which he has no more right to do than the woman to force her individuality upon the man.

In this play, Ibsen completely overshadowed in dramatic craftsmanship the highest

French genius. Here are a grip, a certainty, and a consummate simplicity of statement, that create a new epoch in the drama. The thing haunts one like things seen in life; passes into our experience; frets one like a troublesome injustice in which we have been partakers.

What unforgettable passages are in this play! Nora playing with her children—Nora's sudden realisation that she had no need to fear her husband's sacrificing himself to save her honour, that he is concerned alone with his own little local repute—Dr. Rank's announcement of his discovery that he himself is doomed to speedy and certain death.

With what artistic skill he drove the lesson home of the gulf that yawns between the conventional man and the thinking woman!

It was a great grief to Ibsen, when *A Doll's House* was put upon the German stage, that in order to check the corruption of the play by Philistines who concocted a different ending,

he had to protect himself by writing an alternative ending for such inartistic managers as would not use the play in its complete form. This he particularly detested, as it was exactly "for this last scene that the whole play was written."

It is a strange fact that when *A Doll's House* was played in Italy, the famous actress Eleanore Duse wished the last scene changed—but gave way before Ibsen's passionate appeal.

XIV.

In the month of May, at Munich, in his fifty-second year, Ibsen began an account of the outward events and the inward state of mind to which each of his plays owed their birth; but was most unfortunately persuaded from his purpose by his publisher Hegel. What an irreparable loss Hegel inflicted upon letters may be seen from the prefaces to *Catilina*, *The Feasting at Solhoug* and *The Comedy of Love*. Ibsen took up

the design again for a while in old age—but the years dull a man's eagerness and blur the edge of memory. They would at least have been fascinating confessions.

The end of the year saw the friendship firmly renewed between Ibsen and Byornsen, far from each other though they were on earth. Byornsen, who was in America, had publicly written: "I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that Henrik Ibsen possesses more dramatic power than any other play-writer of our day." Ibsen, in spite of that which repelled him in Byornsen, felt his affection compelled by the man's mighty personality; and when, in the spring of 1881, Byornsen had a narrow escape from death, Ibsen wrote to him that if his friend had died, he himself could never have written any more.

The end of 1880 saw Ibsen settled in Italy again—as it chanced, for five years.

In Rome, at the old Café Nazionale, at the corner where the Corso meets the Via Delia

Ghosts

Mercede, the quaint, spectacled figure of Ibsen, in his enormous wide-awake hat, was well known. In the Via Capo Le Case, he had his flat, "comfortable yet comfortless," as seen by William Archer, fairly furnished but without a sense of home—his pictures lay packed at Munich and he had few books—indeed he was never a great reader of books.

In answer to the fuss and fume over *A Doll's House*, he enquired further into the world's convention of marriage.

If a mother abandon her children, she must do even this rather than surrender her individuality, said Ibsen in *A Doll's House*. What immorality! cried Convention.

Ibsen asked in reply: Do the children benefit by the mother's surrender in living a lie in marriage? He answered the question in *Ghosts*.

The play was daring. "The time had come for some boundary-posts to be removed."

Ibsen called *Ghosts* "a serious drama."

Alving is a drunkard, a rollicking, genial, if a foul-living, fellow, recklessly and shamelessly dissolute, with that fascination, that capacity for winning affection, and with that affectation of good-nature that are the possession or trick or lure of so many selfish blackguards.

The wife of such a man is always the heaviest sufferer.

Mrs. Alving flies from her husband.

He, as was Helmer with Nora, is miserable at her departure.

She takes refuge with Pastor Manders.

The voice of Manders, Public Opinion in a white necktie, persuades her to return to Alving. It is her duty.

She obeys the ordering of society; and goes back to her hell.

Husband and wife resume the old life.

The woman's failure to escape crushes all hope of independence out of her. Alving is a libertine, a loose fish, enfeebled in mind and body; and Mrs. Alving has to sink her individ-

ual life, to give up all attempt at being truthful and the doing of what she knows to be right, in order to avoid collision with her husband and the society to which she has bowed the neck. She sacrifices health and happiness to save his name from execration and to screen his life from the world that she has made his and her judge by remaining with him. In the place of truth she sets up the hypocrisy of society.

She overhears a scuffle between her husband and the housemaid in the next room. Alving's child of this intrigue, Regina, she takes into her service in her mother's place. But when she herself becomes a mother, she determines that her boy shall not be tainted with the sins and lies of this house—she sends him away as soon as he is old enough to notice the acts of his father. The boy at least shall be saved.

Alving continues his debaucheries; and dies a wreck; but she screens and protects his reputation from the world, even after his death.

She is now a complete slave to the dread of the tongue of society. The pathetic part of it is that no one is deceived except herself.

When the play opens, the son, Oswald, has come home.

In the young man she sees the ghost of his father stalking the house. He has inherited his disease and his tastes. She tries to fall back upon the pastor's support again; but she sees that under his black coat of respectability is only self-interest. As she and the pastor talk, to her horror she hears the young fellow in the next room toying with the servant girl, Regina. She hears a bottle uncorked. The hollow voice of the father's ghost speaks. And what a dramatic scene it is, this in which she hears this awful thing between her son and his half-sister, just exactly as she had before heard it in the same place, between the youth's father and the girl's mother!

She has swept and garnished her house in vain. The spectres of the sins of the dead are

G. Bernard Shaw

Joseph Simpson

walking—the teeth of the children set on edge by the grapes that the fathers have eaten. The young fellow is never well; he realises that his brain is being corrupted by the disease he has inherited from his father's vices. He has made his mother solemnly promise that if he goes mad she will give him a dose which he carries in a little box in his pocket. He goes mad calling for "the sun" as the day breaks; and the last curtain comes down on the awful problem whether his mother will or will not give him the poison that she has sworn to give him when madness comes upon him.

Ghosts was published in the December of 1881; and was received with a shriek of execration in the north. It "raised a terrible uproar," says Ibsen. It was refused by every Scandinavian theatre.

The German translators also seem to have lacked the courage for *Ghosts*—but when, three years later, Frau Marie von Borch made

it into German, it raised loud tumult, and divided Germany into two camps. The play met with a hot reception on the German stage; and was again and again suppressed by the police. Ibsen was not wholly unprepared for a disturbance—in Norway, *Peer Gynt* had been reviled, as also *The League of Youth*, *The Pillars of Society*, and *A Doll's House*. But he little foresaw the storm of abuse that *Ghosts* was to bring down upon him, or the fierce quarrel over it that was to spread his name across the face of the world. He was astonished and wholly unprepared for the intensity of the tumult. A "howl from the camp of the stagnationists" he expected; and cared no more for it than for the "barking of a pack of chained dogs." But the alarm amongst the "so-called liberals" amazed him.

"The only man in Norway who has stood up frankly, boldly, and courageously for me, is Byornsen. It is just like him—he has, in very truth, a great, a kingly soul. I shall never for-

get this thing that he has done." The two men had now learnt to understand and value each other. They saw that they had, each in his own way, been fighters for the same cause. Ibsen was becoming enthusiastic over the political struggle into which Byornsen was putting his heart and soul.

He poured out his scorn upon the " champions of liberty" for being "frightened out of their wits" when a leader came amongst them and pointed to freedom. Emancipation was not to be sought only in politics. Slave-souls cannot even use the liberties they possess. "Norway is a free country, peopled by unfree men and women." It was not the attacks that depressed Ibsen—it was the alarm amongst the "so-called liberals." "They would make poor stuff for the manning of barricades."

Through all the tumult and pother, Ibsen kept a cool head. His serene self-confidence and his knowledge of his art stood him in good stead. "The future belongs to my book. These

fellows, who bellow against it, have no relation to the life even of their own day."

All this furious abuse made a profound impression on Ibsen. He realised that he was a power. All parties vied in the bitterness of their attacks upon him and his play. The conservative-Right had been growing more and more suspicious of "their poet"; and when in *Ghosts* they saw him continue with implacable skill his assault upon existing society they drove him from the fold with turmoil and din, pouring all their "moral" indignation upon him and his godless, immoral, society-destroying aims.

Brandes, early in the following year, wrote his second impression of Ibsen's genius; and was hard at work trying to convince Germany also of the man's powers.

When Ibsen wrote *Ghosts*, he was almost unknown outside Scandinavia except that *The Pillars of Society* and *A Doll's House* were making a mark in Germany.

Outside Germany he was scarcely known to Europe—in France wholly unknown.

He now stood on the threshold of world-wide fame.

The play went straight home. That it bit deep into men's minds was shown by the howl of execration which greeted it.

Ghosts hit the conventional man very hard. It may seem strange that Ibsen, in making a son tainted with disease owing to his father's loose love-affairs, should have roused the anger of the respectable. But the conventional man, whilst he smugly pretends to uphold chastity, is really hotly committed to the ideal that a man must be loose, a woman chaste. He blinks the fact that a man, to be loose, must make some woman loose, too. He blinks the fact that a loose bachelor is just as immoral as a loose married man—no more, no less. He blinks the fact that it follows logically that if a man must be loose, so must a

woman—and equally that a loose unmarried woman is exactly as immoral as a loose married man—no more and no less.

When, therefore, we hear the outcry raised against Ibsen, because he does not condemn a married woman for leaving a blackguard whom she did not love for a man she loved, we see the conventional man wholly unmasked, a liar, an idiot, and a hypocrite, who has the insolence to be indignant because a woman refuses to accept his awful blasphemy that she should live a degrading falsity instead of a reality.

Well, Mrs. Alving lives instead the life that society orders to be her duty. And Ibsen gives the result—ending in the madness of her son whom she has borne at the ordering of duty. Society promptly flew out, not at its own brutality, but at Ibsen for revealing that brutality. It is comic, if it were not tragic, to find society so steeped in this famous "morality" of our day, that as astute a critic as Max

Nordau exhibits himself floundering in the fog hopelessly bemuddled. Even whilst he weightily attacks Ibsen for condoning in Mrs. Alving her love for another than her husband whilst condemning Alving as a vile fellow for *his* love affairs, Nordau himself speaks of a man's unchastity as a "venial" affair, woman's lapses as an appalling affair! But what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander; and the moment we allow one law for the man and another for the woman, we give woman the right to claim the loose end of the moralities for herself and demand the chastities for man.

Philistia, that had gasped at *A Doll's House*, now gasped still more.

Indeed, Ibsen himself stands agasp; for the first time he realises that the individual cannot be wholly free—not only that the acts of the parents largely determine the acts of the child, but that, by the very act of being born, we are in the midst of a relation to others. We

cannot shake wholly free of others, whatever our courage.

To such frenzy were Ibsen's enemies driven, that they picked up any mud to fling—even their own brains.

Nordau attacked him for the lack of scientific knowledge. As if Shakespeare were no poet because he puts rapiers on the hips of Caesar's men! So jockeys shriek with laughter at the equestrian figures of Velasquez; and soldiers condemn the art of a battle-piece because the buttons are indifferent correct upon the warriors' tunics!

To such fatuous lengths did criticism go that Nordau, in a scientific book, solemnly blames Ibsen for his mad use of symbolism *in making the weather gloomy during the action of the tragedy!* It is true that Ibsen only too often mars the action of his plays with symbolism, or, what is as bad, effects as of symbolism, dragged in to the detriment and confusion of

their emotional appeal, which, in drama of all arts, should be instant and direct; otherwise it fobbles the impression and the understanding. But in this case, by setting the action in gloom and rain, he was assisting the atmosphere of his idea, not only legitimately and sanely, but with consummate artistry and skill. It is as though Nordau demanded that a funeral march should be written in the blithe cadence of a comic opera.

Ghosts was attacked, in perfect seriousness, for its statement of a subject "heretofore unheard of outside a hospital," by pious folk who prattle unblushingly the same old motive that the sins of the fathers shall descend to the children unto the third and fourth generation. These worthy people had so far forgotten their own faith that they saw "irreligion" in it when mouthed in a different phrase.

The fact was, that, in Norway, many of the critics were theologians; and such are quite unable to judge literature rationally. "That en-

feeblement of the judgment" which is the consequence of "protracted theological study" betrays itself "particularly in the judging of the human character, human actions, and human emotions." Whilst the so-called Liberal press trimmed its sheet to, and was the slave to, the supposed bias of its subscribers.

They tried to make Ibsen responsible for the opinions which any characters gave forth. Of this base trick, resorted to by his enemies, in making what his characters say to represent his own personal views, Ibsen complained very bitterly. "There is not in the whole book," said he, "a single opinion, a single utterance, that can be laid to the account of the author. The construction of the play entirely precludes the author's appearing in the speeches." Ibsen's aim was to create in the mind of the observer the illusion that he was looking upon something real. The intrusion of the author's private opinions into the dialogue must at once kill such an illusion. In none other of his plays

is the author "so entirely absent." "I write a play with five characters, and they insist on putting in a sixth—Ibsen. There never was a play with less utterance of personal opinion in it."

Quite so. It is fatuous to make the words of any character's mouth bear witness against an author. But Ibsen in his defense speaks an ugly half-truth. And he did it more than once on his life's journey. He evades what is a vital point, his moral responsibility for a work of art. The author's judgment must and does appear, no matter how aloof he keep himself from the actual art of his work. And he over and over again, and in the most explicit terms, states that this moral attitude of the artist to his work is a vital part of his work. He was too great an artist to allow himself to thrust his head through the scenery and to give his opinions; but even in the most objective art the artist's attitude to his work always appears. Ibsen protests too much.

Ibsen was equally irate at the charge that the play preaches nihilism. "It preaches nothing," said he. "It merely points out that there is a ferment of nihilism under the surface at home and elsewhere. It is inevitable. A Pastor Manders will always rouse some Mrs. Alving to revolt; and she, being a woman, once roused, will go to great extremes"; for a badly educated, badly trained woman is certain to be driven by men of Pastor Manders' way of thinking and feeling into opposite extremes.

Mark you, he doesn't preach—he only "points out." But this is all juggling with words. What otherwise does he mean by "a leader pointing to freedom"? Or what by "removing some boundary posts"? What Ibsen really meant was that the motive of the play was his own attitude, not the opinions of the characters.

Asked by Archer: What occurred after the last curtain falls? Does she give her son the poison or not? Ibsen laughed. "I don't know,"

said he—"every one must work that out for himself."

He was wont to chuckle hugely over Ploug, the Danish critic's delicious remark that Oswald could scarcely *inherit* disease through merely smoking his father's pipe! And he was as hugely tickled with the discovery "that *Manders* was so called because he stood as symbol for the average *man.*"

Zola, who was said to have inspired *Ghosts*, Ibsen had never even read.

XV.

In the March of 1882, Ibsen was extremely busy with a new play—one of Ibsen's "peaceable" plays! Safe for burgesses and their wives to read, and from which the most respectable theatre need not shrink; and it would be "easy to write," too.

He wrote *An Enemy of the People* in the summer, breaking his two-year habit in the making of a play.

"I have made my studies and observations during the storm" that followed *Ghosts*, he said. And he hugely enjoyed the making of this play—a very masterpiece. "Doctor Stockmann and I got on so well together—we agree on so many things—but the doctor is a more muddle-headed man than I."

Nevertheless, "peaceable" as it was, he awaited its appearance with unmistakable nervousness.

It is pleasant to think that it was on the eve of this masterpiece being given to the world that Ibsen wrote his tribute to Byornsen which rings out like a great bell—almost like a dedication:

"In literature your works occupy, and always will occupy, a place in the foremost rank. But had I to write an inscription upon your monument, it should be: *His life was his greatest work.* So to conduct one's life as to realise one's self—this is the loftiest attainment of man. It is the task of all; but most of us bungle it."

An Enemy of the People

To the execration that was poured out on *Ghosts*, and the foul personal abuse upon himself, Ibsen wrote his answer in his world-famous play *An Enemy of the People;* the figure of Doctor Stockmann is the burly figure of Byornsen, but the voice is the voice of Ibsen.

A noble-hearted, far-seeing, and truthful man, Doctor Stockmann has left all and come back to his little Norwegian town to devote his life to its success and welfare. He creates it into a fashionable watering-place. He becomes its idol, and is worshipped.

One day he discovers that the mineral springs are being contaminated by sewage, and poisoned. He has a scheme to remedy the evil. He at once finds that his hottest supporters waver in their allegiance. The tradespeople fear that visitors will be frightened away. They fear the expense. The editor of the liberal paper sees loss before him—the town-councillors see loss before them—Stock-

mann's own brother, the burgomaster, sees loss. The whole town deserts him. He is shouted down, abused, denied free speech, mobbed, stoned.

He realises that all their worship of him has been the shabbiest cloak for self-interest, greed, self-seeking.

When we speak of the state, we think always of that arrangement by which society, for the common weal, secures peace to the individual. The individual in return agrees to do, or not to do, certain things—this becomes the law. The welfare of the state becomes the standard for the welfare of the individual. The state protects the individual—and the individual in return obeys the laws that the state ought to make for the good of all.

Unfortunately, this peaceful arrangement does not exist. In practice the state does not keep to its bargain. Society always tends more and more to fetter the individual. The

state, which is the lump sum of the opinion of society, is jealous of the individual's originality, of his personality and of his independence —and suspicious of it.

In his opinions and beliefs and convictions, as well as in his acts, every man has a right to be free as long as he does not interfere with the freedom of others. But the state, whilst its function is to protect the freedom of individuals, is suspicious and resentful of intellectual and religious freedom in the individual; it encroaches its majority-mind upon the individual's mind and sets up a mind and a religion and a life for the individual—and punishes the breach of its observances.

This danger to the private liberty of the individual, from the state, creates a still greater danger to the state itself, since progress depends on the originality and foresight of the individuals; and it is clear that originality must always be the exception in the bulk of the nation.

Ibsen

Genius is the most important "exception" of all; it is, at the same time, the most vital to the progress of the state.

Hence genius is always stoned by the state. It is God's aristocracy that is crucified.

Doctor Stockmann attacks the "compact liberal majority," not because it is liberal but because it only pretends to be. Each member of the majority is working only "for himself and family, not for the public good." Thus, even whilst he clamours for the individual, he condemns the individual who does not work for the public good.

Ibsen is for freedom against the tyranny of the majority—that is to say, even against such as call themselves liberals, simply because they are a little more advanced than the stupidest of their fellows. It is not the majority that is right, but genius—the one—the seeing one. "The majority never has right on its side, never, I say." Is the majority the wise or the

fools? It can never be right that the fools should govern the wise. They have the might, not the right. The "compact majority" is never so advanced as the pioneers; and by the time it is in line with what the pioneers have striven for, the pioneers have advanced beyond it again.

Byornsen said, "The majority is always right." Ibsen retorted: "The minority is always right," carefully adding that he does not mean "the minority of stagnationists who are left behind by the great middle party, but the minority which leads the van and pushes on to points which the majority has not yet reached." "That man is right who has allied himself most closely with the future."

The everlasting consideration for the good opinion of the majority crushes truth and justice.

Ibsen allowed that we must all work for the spread of our opinions, but he insists that it must be alone. A fighter in the intellectual

vanguard can never collect a majority round him. In ten years the majority may be where Doctor Stockmann was at the public meeting; but Stockmann meanwhile will be ten years ahead of the majority—he will not have stood still. He can never have the majority with him.

"Where I stood, as I wrote each book, is now a tolerably compact crowd; but I myself am no longer there—further ahead, I hope."

It is no disgrace to be persecuted by the majority; but an honour—that the wise should seek. It makes a strong man stronger, not weaker—bringing out his greater strength. The man who agrees with the majority is a weakling, not a leader—he becomes bound hand and foot by its customs and its weaknesses. "The strongest man is he who stands most alone."

Ibsen believed in the individual radical, the great progressive personality, to lead the people. He had no patience with the "practical" politician's attitude of "one step forward every

day." The man who counts is for "All or Nothing." He detested the parliamentarian; distrusted him. The individual alone can accomplish. A herd of men will be bound by the common intelligence; not led by the supreme one. A parliament he saw as a mere assembly of orators and dilettanti. (He would laugh when a political problem arose and "a commission was then appointed" or "a society was formed.")(Like General Booth of Salvation Army fame, he thought that the Israelites would never have got across the Red Sea if instead of Moses they had relied on a committee.) He saw degeneracy in the way that every man who has a cause nowadays tries to get it syndicated to advance it—founds a society or league. ("I hear," he writes to Brandes, "you have formed a society! Do not rely implicitly upon every one who joins you; with an adherent, everything depends upon his reasons for adherence. . . The man who stands alone is the strongest.")

He was depressed by the crudity, the "plebeian element," in all public oratory.

In this play Ibsen boldly declares himself an individualistic anarchist. And he shows in the doing, in the most precise terms, the vast difference between individualism and selfishness.

It is one of the defects of Ibsen's constant attack on the advanced part of the community *for not being advanced enough*, that the dull-eyed of the middle-class of the nation should rejoice, being too blind to see that the contempt and hatred which he pours upon the liberal majority bites with far deeper tooth into the "stagnationists," whom he despises so utterly that he ignores them as beneath contempt.

And it is part of the irony which dogged Ibsen's footsteps, that the stagnationists hailed with gurgles of joy his attack on the "damned compact liberal majority," blissfully unheeding of the fact that he condemned that liberal majority because it was as contemptible at heart as a conservative majority!

An Enemy of the People

What aroused Ibsen's contempt for the "compact liberal majority" was that, instead of following its brain, which must always be in the minority of its advanced guard, it made itself a constant hindrance to that brain by having its feet planted on the selfishness and greed and hypocrisies and lies in which the conservative majority wallows.

Ibsen gazed at the grey provincial life that had fallen upon his people with the coming of the kingship of the respectable middle-class, the rule of the commercial democracy; and he saw that it was not good—its false ideals, its shabby make-believes, its hypocrisy and its cant—above all, its denial of nature and its conflict with the functions of body and soul and will that the Creator has given to man.

He saw that the middle-class had not only filched power from the nobles, but was as fiercely tyrannical to the working class as the nobles had been to both—saw that their so-called democracy was really but a combination

of the old nobles and the middle-class to force their interests upon all others. ("The very praiseworthy attempt to make our people a democratic community has inadvertently gone a good way toward making us a plebeian community.")

To Ibsen, the average man is small, egotistical, conceited, contemptible. Mankind is pitiably bad, not actively wicked. It needs passion and strength to be wicked.

Ibsen was never a member of a party; he was a gifted personality, isolated and solitary from his people. He naturally believed in, and respected, personality. He was not made of the stuff that seeks, or judges its value by, popularity.

Such a man, believing above all things in the rights and power of the individual, at war from his earliest years with the world about him, would always have contempt for the multitude.

"What is the use of being despondent?" he writes to Brandes. Energetic work is the best cure, and "a genuine full-blooded egoism

which will force you to regard what concerns yourself as the only thing of any consequence, and everything else a non-existent. . . There is no way in which you can benefit society more than by coining the metal you have in yourself, I have never had any firm belief in solidarity; in fact, have accepted it as a tradition. If one had courage to throw it overboard altogether, one might be rid of the ballast that weighs down one's personality most heavily. There are moments when the whole history of the world looks like one great shipwreck, and the only thing seems to be to save oneself. From special reforms I expect nothing. The whole race is on the wrong track—*that* is the trouble—with its untenable ideals." The history of man, to Ibsen, was like that of "a young shoemaker who has forsaken his last and gone on the stage." Man has made a fiasco in the rôles of lover and hero. All the nations are the same. "The masses, both at home and abroad, are without understanding of higher things."

Nay, lest the sacred personality of the individual be sacrificed, he would have us keep guard against the dangers that are in every relation of life—even friendship and marriage. To develop all the fullest possibilities in ourselves, the individual must stand free and stand alone. "Friends are a costly luxury; and when one invests one's capital in a calling or a mission in life, one cannot afford to have friends. The costliness of friendship does not lie in what one does for friends, but in what one, out of regard for them, leaves undone. This means the crushing of many an intellectual germ. . . I have to look back on a number of years during which it was not possible for me to be myself."

Ibsen believed that, in every human being, slumbers the germ of a mighty unconquerable soul, its human individuality. It is man's duty to develop that individuality to its full powers, for its own sake. The first condition of that development is that he shall be free to be his

whole self, without surrenders to the world. The spirit of compromise is death.

That is, of course, the ideal government in which the individual has complete liberty, without tyranny from others and without injury to others. This is no discovery of Ibsen's —it is man's ideal. But Ibsen, like all anarchists, whilst he attacks government by the state, does not leave us quite clear as to how this complete liberty of the individual is to be realised.

Democracy, it is true, in practice, is not a perfect form of government. It is quite true that the danger of a democracy is in its natural tendency to thrust the tyranny of its majority-mind upon all; and so rob the individual of just that very freedom that it is its object and its boast to give. A democracy, if it be a live force, must create men who are in advance of itself. But it is surely exactly in this power to create leaders that it has shown its highest title

to power. Ibsen inclines to confuse the machinery by which democracy governs—majorities, suffrage, and so on—with the end for which it is the machinery, the creating of progressive leaders. He admits that the hereditary principle of getting leaders is wholly rotten. But he also attacks the selection of leaders by majorities. His alternative to the rule by majorities is to create a democracy of noble men. Precisely. But this is the ideal of democracy.

Whilst Ibsen is against the "compact majority," let us be under no delusions as to his belief in the setting of a people under the heel of a Bismarck or a Cromwell. He believes in a real democracy; but it must not be a state; it has a mighty task before it—not to form parties, but, as he says in *Rosmersholm*, "to make every man in the land a nobleman." That is a real democracy only that is a people of free individuals, like "the English, whose characteristic practical ability is blended with a purity

and nobility of the emotional nature and a generosity of sentiment which make the whole nation a nation of aristocrats—in the best sense of the word."

A democracy is undoubtedly shy of new ideas. But it is less shy of them than hereditary legislators. It is when we take to worshipping the machinery of democracy that it becomes as dangerous to the common-weal as are kings or the priesthood or the nobility. And Ibsen shows only too clearly the danger of worshipping majorities instead of the ideals that majorities should be employed to achieve. The moment men set up, above the individual, a power to which they grant greater wisdom and authority than to the individual, whether it be a king or priest or noble or a majority, from that moment they create "man-eating idols, scarlet with the blood of human sacrifice."

But to arrive at Ibsen's vague ideal of realising the freedom of the individual in conjunc-

tion with his belief in a nation as against a state, we must try to grasp his idea of liberty —what he means by freedom.

"The only thing I love about liberty is the struggle for it; I care nothing for the possession of it." "Liberty is not the same thing as political liberty." "He who possesses liberty, otherwise than as an aspiration, possesses it soulless, dead. The quality of liberty is that, as long as it is being striven after, it goes on expanding. Therefore, the man who stands still in the midst of the struggle and says: '*I have it*,' merely shows by so doing that he has lost it. Now this very contentedness in the possession of a dead liberty is a characteristic of the so-called state; and it is worthless. No doubt the vote, self-taxation, and so on, are benefits—but to whom? To the citizen, not to the individual. Now, reason does not demand that the individual should be a citizen. Far from it. The state is the curse of the individual. With what is Prussia's strength

bought? With the blotting out of the individual into the political and geographical idea. . . . On the other hand, take the Jewish people, the aristocracy of the human race—how is it they have kept their place apart, poetical, individual, amidst surroundings of barbarous cruelty? By having no state to burden them. Had they remained in Palestine, they would long ago have lost their individuality in the process of their state's construction, like all other nations. Away with the state! I will take part in that revolution. Undermine the whole conception of a state; make free choice and spiritual kinship the only all-important conditions of any union, and you will have the beginning of a liberty that is worth something. Changes in forms of government are pettifogging affairs—a degree less or a degree more, mere foolishness. Cease to respect the mere venerableness of a thing. The state has its root in time; it will ripe with time and rot with time. Greater things than the state will fall—all

religions will fall—neither moral conceptions nor art-forms have an eternity before them. To how much are we in duty bound to pin our faith?"

"What is not strong enough to bear the ideas of the age must succumb."

Ibsen saw that the life of a people, its moral and intellectual development, was of far higher consequence than its constitution as a state—indeed, he could see no reasonable need for the existence of the state. The fuss and wrangle to gain little patches of outward-seeming liberty, the so-called liberty of the man as a citizen of a state, were stupid. He called for a revolution that would destroy the state, and secure for ever the unlimited liberty of the individual. He was anarchist.

"A state may be annihilated; but not a nation." In a state the aristocracy has its interests, the citizens theirs, the peasants theirs—independent, often antagonistic. A nation has literature, art, science, that advance

the world. The Jews were a state and a nation —the state is destroyed, but the nation lives.

He would rail against the parochialism of Copenhagen, and call for nationalism. He, who was so hot upon the individual, had no sympathy with the individual states against their nations. "Only entire nations can join in great intellectual movements." "A change in the theory of life and of the world is not a parochial matter." "We Scandinavians, compared to Europe, are not beyond the parish-council footing." "Do you find a parish-council making its path or aiming for the Third Kingdom?"

Bitterly opposed to the state, he approves least of all of small states, having indeed a horror of the tyranny and pettiness and narrow-mindedness that they engender. He showed with exquisite beauty of phrasing in his masterly play, *The Pretenders*, his support of great national unions such as he wished to see in the union of the Scandinavian kingdoms; yet

his dream of individual liberty and the abolition of the state made this no easy affair. In his passionate eagerness to see Norway aid Denmark in her struggle against Germany, to one who cried: "You would have got a sound thrashing," he answered: "Of course; but it would have brought us into the movement—into touch with Europe. Anything rather than remain mere outsiders."

Ibsen overstated his case more than a little. He gets entangled in his own feet. Here and there he makes the Doctor drive his hobby beyond its gait. When he talks of "detesting to lead men—they stand in the path of a free man wherever he turns," we begin to seek for an ancestry for him down Killarney way. He brings us face to face with what the Irishman called "a pregnant bull." But when he adds, "I would exterminate them like other animals," he simply talks balderdash. It is childish to say, "The majority is never right"—and even

more stupid to say, "The minority is always right." As a matter of fact, of course, it is true that the majority is often wrong and the minority is often right—and perhaps nearly always right when it is the advanced guard of the majority. But Ibsen is so disgusted with the majority that he will beat it with any stick. "The liberals are freedom's worst enemies," he says passionately. "Freedom of thought and spirit thrives best under absolutism; France showed this, then Germany, and now Russia." This comes close to twaddle. Ibsen's enthusiasm for the struggle for liberty being superior to Liberty, for which the struggle is made, makes him overlook the obvious fact that if the nations have achieved the liberty for which they fought, they must at least be further advanced towards higher liberty than when in the state of inferior liberty.

Speaking of Russia he said, "A splendid country! Think of all the grand oppression they have! Only think of all the glorious love

of liberty it engenders! Russia is one of the few countries in the world where men still love liberty and make sacrifices for it. That is why she holds so high a place in poetry and art. Remember that they have a Turgueneff."

So firmly does he believe in the struggle for liberty creating strong and vigorous souls, that he would create tyrannies in order to make men struggle to destroy them! Again we suspect the mother down Killarney way.

And this, too, is the man who held that, when great spirits are abroad in a nation, the rest of the nation is proportionately dull!

Whilst Ibsen could see the evils of his age with keen eye, his ideas for what ought to be were in a state of flux. He seems unable to grasp the value of comradeship—of the individuality of a people as apart from an individual. Yet even his confused constructive thought makes him realise that Norway is greater as a people than as a multitude of

warring interests—in other words, of individuals.

When man came down from the tree, and stood up on his hind legs, he was individual; but he was low and weak. He found strength by joining in the valley council. From the valley he passed to the more powerful mutual strength of the walled city—from the city to the state—from the state to the imperial peoples. And as his strength grew, he grew also in liberty; though he be not yet wholly free.

If a man would be anarchist, and destroy the state, he must destroy also the security that the state gives him from the tyranny of his neighbours. Ibsen probably never realised what the state gave him, even if in grudging fashion—his sleep, his ease, his capacity to be free. He took all that the state gave him with thankless hands; and because the majority does not move forward as quickly as its leaders to mutual freedom, he jibed and jeered at it, and scalded it, and rightly scalded it, for its shame and hypocrisies.

He realised what dangers he himself ran from being born in hypocrisy. Yet we find him, even whilst he cries for liberty of men and women in their love, cruelly punishing lapses from the majority's sexual laws, and in man decrying as a vileness what he would forgive in a woman, and even approving death as a fit punishment!

To sum up Ibsen's "the majority is always wrong," then, we find him possessed with the democratic ideal that that is real liberty only whereby each individual is free to live his own life—ideal democracy is that in which every man is a nobleman. But in his detestation of majorities, because they thrust their majority-minds upon the individual instead of trying to be a majority of free individuals, he would sweep away the state and its functions.

Ibsen is by instinct a socialist—but by intellect an anarchist.

Like all anarchists, he does not grasp that

whilst the ideal of the socialist is to be a free community of free individuals, "every man a nobleman," the socialist sees that the only way to arrive at this is through a makeshift-democracy which, though it does not contain, to begin with, a highly developed average man, trusts to the makeshift-democracy to bring up its lowest to its highest ideal in time and create a real democracy. If the anarchist could show the way out, whereby this stage of makeshift-democracy could be overleaped, and a community of men straightway created whose every member should be fit to enjoy absolute individual freedom without encroachment on the freedom of his fellows—a nation of noblemen—then the ideal nation would be born.

Ibsen does not show the way.

He was a satirist—the maker of destructive criticism. And, as a satirist, like a caricaturist, he employs exaggeration to force the truth. But he was not a leader to constructive life.

And he leaves us to infer what he approves only by digging for the reverse of what he attacks.

He would have all the "unprivileged" form themselves into one strong, resolute party with only practical and productive reforms in view —such as a wide suffrage, improvement of the position of women by law, national education freed from all taint of mediaevalism. But how is this to be achieved without a "majority"?

An Enemy of the People is one of the keenest, most masterly, wittiest and most compelling plays of the age. Doctor Stockmann is an immortal figure. Every character is alive —Ibsen has created them with keen humour and biting satire, has infused them with mortal breath so that they pass into our experience, become a part of our acquaintance, and we know them for ever.

In this epoch-making play, Ibsen's artistry

is very great. In spite of the blunder that if the water-supply of the place were full of fever germs the whole town would thereby be smitten with the plague, and that even selfish bumbledom would realise the far greater expense that typhoid amongst the visitors would entail on the trades-people than any rebuilding operations, the play is convincing and stirring. One of the most difficult amongst all stage effects, a public meeting with its public speech, is realised with rare skill, and results in a superb achievement.

Ibsen had learnt a sharp lesson from *A Doll's House*. Like Nora, Stockmann ends alone; but he does not, like Nora, fly from the battle. He stays upon the field, to recruit an army.

XVI.

In the June of 1883, Ibsen was at Rome, his mind running on the plot of a new play in four acts.

It was in this year that the first great literary

criticism of Ibsen in German was written by Ludwig Passarge.

In November, Ibsen was making a last effort to get his son into the diplomatic service of Norway. Sigurd had passed all the qualifying examinations for the Italian service; but Ibsen shrank from having him naturalised. "It is a very serious matter for a man to sever himself completely from his country." His appeal was successful. The following year, Sigurd entered the Norwegian consular service; and the year after, he was appointed to the diplomatic service of Sweden-Norway, going to Washington, and afterwards to Vienna. He became in 1902 a member of the Ministry and eventually Norwegian Minister at Stockholm.

A member of the peasant-Left Ibsen never became; but his writings formed a part of the great work of Norway's awakening.

In the March of 1884 he signed the petition for the Married Woman's Property Bill, at

the same time pointing out that those in power would not easily give their obvious rights to women; and that the suffrage also ought to be given to them, but that these things are not given away by those who have them; "they must be fought for," especially with a peasant-landlordism like that of Norway—peasants are always lacking in real liberalism and in self-sacrifice, in his experience, the wide world over, and are always self-seeking.

After Ibsen had boldly stated his attitude to his age in *An Enemy of the People*, he seems to have fallen into a state of discouragement. It was as though he asked himself whether this determined attitude to be free and truthful to his own individuality were possible in a world that lived on lies, and of which make-believe was the very breath. Nay, supposing falsehood were as necessary as food and air to the world! Might it not just be that the truthful man was a blunderer, who only brought misery

and suffering in his train, and did no good whatever?

For answer he wrote *The Wild Duck*.

In this play he touches bottom in pessimism.

The play opens in a sordid household. The husband, Hjalmar, is a good-for-nothing idler who thinks himself a high-souled, sensitive being who is sacrificing himself to clearing his disreputable old father's name from the taint of prison. He dawdles and waits for the inspiration that will make him a famous inventor one day. The old man had really been falsely imprisoned instead of old Werle, the merchant, who, to ease his mind, gives him a small job to starve upon. But the old father's brain has given way before his shame; he gets drunk whenever he can, and spends the rest of his time in a garret, "the living lie," which he has made into a toy forest with old Christmas-trees, and filled with rabbits and pigeons. Here he plays at being young again and goes hunting with a gun that does not fire and a pistol

with which he shoots an occasional rabbit or pigeon. The only thing sacred to him is a wild duck which belongs to the little girl, Hedvig.

Hjalmar's wife, Gina, is a vulgar, commonplace, sensible woman, quite content with her lot, whose coarseness forever jars on the sensitive soul of her lord. She does the housework and cooking, and carries on the photographic business which her husband is supposed to conduct. She is an immortal figure with her frank, rude, truthful nature.

They have a young daughter, who adores her father, and believes in the coming invention that is to make them all rich—the gentle, great-soul'd, loving child, Hedvig.

In the room below is a lodger, the drunken parson, Molvik.

There comes to the house a new lodger, Gregers Werle, son of old Werle the merchant—he who let the mad old fellow in the garret go to prison for his misdeed.

Gregers Werle is an honest young fellow, a dreamer—his thought always to help; but he is forever thrusting the truth upon his fellows, in season and out of season. Misfortune always follows. He thinks that every problem of life is settled as soon as the truth is blurted out about it.

Side by side with Gregers Werle moves Doctor Relling, a good-hearted, cynical fellow, who looks upon life as a lie. The world's a hole of a place, and men sorry muddlers; why try to drag them off the dung hill? Without lies they would go perish. Lies alone bring man happiness. If any one is dissatisfied with life, Relling supplies him with an illusion to make him happy.

Thus come into this house Gregers Werle and Doctor Relling who have the same end in view—to make the world happy; but their means are opposite.

Now, Gregers Werle, hearing that his father has married his cast-off mistress, Gina, to Hjal-

mar, one of Gregers' friends, decides to blurt out the truth in his household and thus lay the foundations of a real marriage in the truth. He busies himself with, and worries his soul about, this man and his wife—and is troubled with the thought that their marriage is not ideal. He learns that Gina has not told her husband that she is the cast-off mistress of old Werle, and he comes to the decision that her life is a lie; and that to make the marriage ideal, the pair should know each other's lives. He bursts the truth upon them, and asks them if they do not feel happier. But he does not find the world eager to worship the "claims of the ideal." The husband is angry, and talks conventional bluster about the impossibility of living with his wife any longer, brutally repudiates his child Hedvig, and flounces out of the house. The wife is furious at being shown up. Indeed, Ibsen creates an immortal character in Gina, the plain, matter-of-fact, practical woman of common sense, the scrupulous fulfiller of

all duties. The scene between Gina and her worthless husband, Hjalmar, in wnich she confesses her former "affair," is as pathetically comic as the resulting scene between them when the contemptible poser of a husband comes home again after spending the night out.

But Gregers Werle has set another disaster agog to its fulfilment, and it is no tragi-comedy this time. He talks to the sensitive, noble-hearted girl Hedvig about duty and self-sacrifice—never realising that the child may one day find his teaching her sole guide in trouble. Coarsely disowned by her father, and deeply wounded by his disgusting repudiation of her; seeing herself the apple of discord in the house, and with the beauty of self-sacrifice deeply implanted in her wounded heart, she has an exquisitely written scene with the bungling, well-intentioned busy-body, Gregers Werle, in which his suggestion to the child to kill her most treasured belonging, the wild duck, as atonement to her father, is told with such tragic power that the hellish suggestion

to the wounded, sensitive child stabs one across the footlights, and clutches at our throats. We see the foolish suggestion arouse the child to suffer—she screws up her courage and goes to sacrifice her best-loved treasure to atone to her father; but when it comes to the agony of it, she sacrifices herself to save the innocent bird, and shoots herself with the pistol in the garret.

Gregers Werle finds that, with the best intentions, it is a mad and dangerous thing to form ideals for others—that people cannot be rid of their weaknesses by others from without, they can only and must free themselves. He ends by quitting the stage to rid the world of himself, since it is such a chaos of lies that it is not worth living in.

Ibsen, in his plays, had been stripping conventional ideals, and showing their nakedness. In *The Wild Duck* he grimly stripped the ideal that he had created for himself.

In this sombre drama, Hjalmar, his wife

Gina, and the gentle, devoted and loving Hedvig are amongst Ibsen's greatest creations.

The play holds a position apart in Ibsen's art. With *The Wild Duck* he enters upon "new paths." The method differs from all his former plays.

It was written in the summer of 1884 in Rome and the Tyrol.

Here Ibsen asks, by the way: Has a woman, who is chaste before marriage, the right to expect chastity in her husband before marriage? And has a man who has fallen with women before marriage the right to complain if his wife has so fallen with men? He seems to show that there can be no true marriage without mutual confession and mutual trust.

In the September of 1884, Ibsen and Byornsen met at Schwaz, in the Tyrol; and the two old friends were deeply affected, after their twenty years' separation. This renewal of friendship was without a shadow for the rest of Ibsen's life.

Rosmersholm

XVII.

In 1885, Ibsen left Italy, and visited Norway for the second time. He was at open war with the political and social powers; and the visit was a jar. He spent the summer in Norway. "Never have I been more repelled—never more disagreeably impressed," he said.

Addressing the Workman's Union, that had gathered to welcome him, he said he had "found immense progress in most directions," but he was disappointed to find that the individual was not allowed either religious liberty nor the freedom of utterance. And he went on to say that much remained to be done before the nation attained liberty; that the present democracy was not equal to the task; that the national life, the parliament, and the press, needed an element of nobility—not the nobility of birth nor of money nor of knowledge nor even of intellect, but "nobility of character, of will, of soul. That alone can free us; and from two groups will this aristocracy come to our

people—from our women and from our workmen. The revolution preparing in Europe is chiefly concerned with the future of the workers and the women. In this I place all my hopes and expectations; for this I will work all my life and with all my strength."

He returned to Munich in the autumn; and in November wrote to Brandes: "I feel at home here, much more so than in my own home, so-called."

In Germany, oddly enough, were laid the foundations of his world-wide renown. "I began by feeling myself to be a Norwegian; I developed into a Scandinavian; I have ended as a Teutonian. . . . It is abroad that we Scandinavians are to win our decisive battle; a victory in Germany, and you will be master of the situation at home." And in Germany he now remained until he was sixty-three (1891). Ibsen's visit to Norway freshened his sense of the country and its personalities, and the impressions aroused in him resulted in the "con-

flict-drama" of *Rosmersholm.* The play is a marked retracing of his art to the poetic tendencies of *Brand.* There are "harps in the air."

Early in 1886, in his fifty-eighth year, he was hard at work upon the new play—"a call to work . . . and the struggle which all serious-minded human beings have to wage with themselves in order to bring their lives into harmony with their convictions.... The different spiritual functions do not develop abreast of each other in any one human being. Conscience is, on the other hand, very conservative—it has its roots deep in traditions and the past. Hence the conflict."

Ibsen had come back from his visit to Norway, saddened by the intolerance of factions —saddened to see the fight for causes replaced by the vulgar abuse of persons. Old friends were bitter foes merely because they had different views of life. This atmosphere is the background to *Rosmersholm.* The bitterness of the losers is shown through Rector Kroll;

the contemptible fearfulness and timidity of speaking plainly in the winners is shown through the free-thinking Mortensgaard, the "expediency-monger," who cannot do without the Christian allies, and who can live without an ideal, and has thus discovered "the secret of action and success."

Against this black background move Rosmer and Rebecca.

In *The Wild Duck*, Ibsen follows out the mischief (for it is, in its results, bound to be disastrous) caused by a mere busy-body thrusting his ideals upon others. In *Rosmersholm* he takes instead, as he did in *Brand*, the idealist who is accepted by the world as one privileged to thrust his ideals on others, the priest—with this difference that in Brand we have a tragic figure who had the innate will to carry through his ideal, reckless of all consequences; whilst in Rosmer we have the priest who has not the will.

The Lord of Rosmersholm, a house that is

in the very heart of the social influence of the place, is a man of noble mind, who, to the priest's privilege of being allowed to thrust his ideals of life upon others, comes to the business with the added social privilege granted to an aristocratic house.

He is married to an ordinary woman, affectionate and without any ambition for him or herself, content with their supreme position in the whole world about them.

In contrast to Rosmer, a young woman, Rebecca, steps into the household, with the fixed idea of thrusting a great career upon the man she shall love, and with a vigorous and untamed will wherewith to fulfil her ambition. It so happens that Mrs. Rosmer has taken a hot fancy to this young woman, and invites her to come and live in her home.

Rebecca, an orphan girl, without money, a free-thinker and a radical, detesting the narrow life of her childhood in her little Norwegian village, sees in the Rosmer circle scope for an ambitious and able woman.

Rebecca is recklessness in woman's shape. She is a woman who could carry anything through. She has intrepid "free-born will." Caution is a stranger to her. For her, there is no pause between urging and act. To desire is to make the effort to gain her desire. Courage of decision and audacity to act have made her a personality amongst the hesitating and undecided and timid people amongst whom she has been brought up—failures and feeble individualities. She has an individuality of her own, unfettered by prejudice.

She leaves her humble and depressing home to live in the Rosmer household. The adventuress enters the home, and at once falls passionately in love with Pastor Rosmer. A craving for happiness comes upon her. The man unwittingly falls under the spell of the woman who understands him.

For this passion Rebecca stakes her very soul. Rosmer's sickly wife stands in the way, making the man's life gloomy and wretched.

Until this wife is dead, there is no faintest chance for him of freedom and happiness. Rebecca deliberately drives the wife towards suicide in the mill-race—and she, seeing what is coming, and, to clear her husband's name from scandal, and to leave him free to be happy with Rebecca, drowns herself.

Of course, everybody but Rosmer knows why she did the awful thing. But everybody keeps silence; no shame must come to this aristocratic family. Even the radical editor also enters into the lie of silence—his aims being respectability, and his hope to get Rosmer over to the people's party to give it position.

The play opens a year after the tragedy.

A tender, pure relationship has drawn Rebecca and Rosmer together. Love has come, though never mentioned by either—a very perfect marriage of souls, without confidences exchanged—fervent devotion, free of all violent passion.

Rosmer has felt drawn, all unwitting of it, to Rebecca from her coming to the house—has drunk in all her ideas, has increased in individuality. Easily influenced, he has been drawn away from the old conventions to the new life that is abroad. The old beliefs have gone. Rebecca, for her part, has become ennobled by this man's nobility of nature, his humanity, and his affectionate personality. Her strong will, made stronger by the opposition of the weaker wills amongst which she had aforetime lived, is now made captive, her hideous sensual passions have become purified. She sees now that her fierce passion for this man was not love, as pure love wins her soul—the love that desires not so much for itself but is ready to sacrifice itself for him.

Rosmer, refined, distinguished, respected, but impotent in will and lacking in every quality that goes to make a leader of men, except a calm nobility of aim, has set himself to make this people proud, free, and noble. "Peace and

gladness and reconciliation must be brought home to men's minds." Men must be ennobled —their minds set free and their wills purified.

He was unfortunately not the man to do it. The vigour of will that he lacks, Rebecca has brought him.

As long as he was orthodox and conventional and conservative, he had the homage and the admiration of his fellows, and everything he did had the best interpretation put upon it—his acts and actions were always considered sound—even when the young girl Rebecca came into the house and unsettled it, she was accepted by his world.

Rebecca, however, has led him to intellectual freedom. She changes Rosmer into a man of action. He declares his loss of old beliefs and his awakening to radicalism. The place becomes at once a camp of the enemy. They do to him exactly what he has heretofore done to his enemies—they do not attack his views, but his life and his conduct. As soon as he

makes clear that he has changed his views, (public opinion turns against him, and all his acts are judged in the worst possible light and from the worst possible motives.) The conservatives begin persecuting him, and the liberals pray his silence as they want to benefit by his prestige, being as afraid of freethinkers as the conservatives are.

Fanatical reaction and plebeianism combine to stab at his honour. At once a scandal is started about Rebecca.

Rosmer is shocked that so-called gentlemen should thus stoop. At the same time his eyes are opened to his love for Rebecca. His wife's death overwhelms him with guilt. But he can at least save Rebecca's honour. He offers her marriage. But she dares not—she knows that she is the guilty one, not he. The awful thing that she has done stands between. She refuses him.

Rosmer sinks into despair, haunted by the guilt of his wife's death. His ideal of en-

nobling the world lies in ruins at his feet; it can be done only by a man strong in his "innocence."

In the presence of Kroll, the schoolmaster, the brother of the dead woman, Rebecca "gives back his innocence" to Rosmer by confessing her guilt; and, in a magnificent lie, says it was done from ambition.

Rosmer walks out of the room with Kroll.

Rebecca packs up, to slip away from Rosmersholm, out into the world—and is about to go, when Rosmer suddenly returns alone. Thinking over the ghastly business, he sees that ambition accounts for the guilt, but not for the confession. He asks her why she made that confession. And she pours out her love for him, telling him with touching pathos that his comradeship has changed her from a self-seeking adventuress to a woman who is now about to sacrifice all her hopes of happiness by leaving him, he who has changed her violent passion into a pure and noble love.

But he remembers that she has tricked him before. He cannot trust her.

She bows to his unbelief.

Suddenly his old ideals come back to him—the traditions in which he has been bred. And he tells her there is one proof she can give that she loves him. The old lust for sacrifice is upon him. He prefers "proof" of love to love. And with the terrible brutality of his ancient ideals, he asks whether she will prove her love for him, by doing what his wife did for love of him. Then he would believe in her, and recover his faith in himself and in the soul's power to attain to nobility.

And she, out of her great love for him, and seeing that his greed for his faith in himself is greater than his love for her, that he is too weak of will and heart to love her as she loves him, answers:

"You shall have your faith."

Here we have the irony of the fact that Rosmer has been able to infect only Rebecca, the

woman who loves him, with the nobility of soul that he possesses—not the mob which is most in need of it. Rebecca, liar and criminal, is transformed—the woman leaves her sullied past behind her, and is purified and ennobled.

But *she* has ennobled the man more than he knows. He realises, if half blindly, that this awful demand that a woman shall destroy her life, to restore to him his own high estimate of himself, is a hideous thing. He decides, corrupted by the superstition of the expiation by self-sacrifice, that he must die with her.

But she, bowing to the sacrifice, dies in no such quagmire of the soul. Rebecca, the once sinful, criminally reckless and selfish adventuress, transfigured and glorified by the purity of the love that has ennobled her, resenting still with calm eyes of sanity the brutality of his ancient faith that has denied her the right to live happily, resenting the gross bondage of that faith over this man who, even now that he has rejected his God, still demands her life as blood-offering to the remnants of his ancient

ideal, goes forth to die from pure comradeship, paying the price of the rotting house of Rosmersholm. So poor, sinning Rebecca to her cost accepts the grey puritanism of the north, that "never laughs." As she says: "The Rosmer view of life ennobles, but it kills happiness."

They leap together into the mill-stream. And the curtain comes down on one of the most powerful endings known in modern drama, written with that astonishing suggestion and artistic restraint whereby Ibsen makes his master-work haunt the mind. The housekeeper's description of the death of these two people grips the emotions.

So, from the old-world culture that was tyrant over man's will and individuality and freedom, Rosmer is set free too late; and from the new, young, reckless, unbridled culture Rebecca is purified too late.

In Rosmersholm Ibsen unburdened himself of what it was "a vital necessity" to him to

give forth to the public, knowing at the same time that it would give offence to many; and, having done so, took no more eager interest in the polemics of the day.

And it is interesting to note that Ibsen now not only speaks out as always for freedom and truth, but adds humanity to the highest aims of man.

XVIII.

In the January of 1887, *Ghosts* was played with large success in Berlin. Indeed, Ibsen's fame was now increasing by bounds in Germany, three critical works being published in German this year upon his writings.

During the summer, Ibsen's quaint, long, black frock-coated little figure, with white tie at his throat, and the silk hat a-top of, and a world too small for, the great head, was well-known to the seafaring folk of Fredericks-haven in Jutland, and at Saeby hard by. He liked Frederickshaven the better, as he could roam about all day amongst the shipping and

talk to the sailor-folk. The sea he always found congenial to contemplation and constructive thinking.

Though he told William Archer at this time that he was plotting to have "some tomfoolery ready for next year," he was not writing during this summer, nor indeed during the winter before it, being overwhelmed with the business of producing his plays in Germany. The controversy in Berlin was now very fierce over his work—he was not only exalted as a genius but was become the standard against which the German writers were judged and found wanting. This was not without its embarrassments for Ibsen, since Heyse, whose plays Ibsen considered poor but his novels masterpieces, was his friend, and lived near him in Munich. The controversy about Ibsen was creating a wide pamphlet literature.

This serious increase in the business of producing his plays in Germany had made it necessary for Ibsen to leave the south.

The Lady from the Sea

It was on this the eve of his sixtieth year that Count Prozor, a Russian diplomatist in Paris, and his wife translated *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House* into French. This gave Ibsen great joy—it had "long been his dream." Prozor became his authorised French translator.

And it was in this same year, he being practically wholly unknown to the English-speaking race, probably even to Bernard Shaw—and *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* unthought of—that William Archer wrote: "As a thinker, not as a poet, Ibsen is essentially a kindred spirit with Shaw."

Little did Ibsen realise that in two years' time his fame would spread to England and America, and cause a controversy to rage therein with virulence for ten years.

In the next year, William Archer was translating Ibsen's dramas into English.

Antoine, at his now famous Theatre Libre, was the first to make Ibsen's characters speak across the footlights of the French stage.

Ibsen

In the summer of 1888, Ibsen was back at Munich writing his new five-act play, *The Lady from the Sea.*

In a little seaport town, Doctor Wangel, a widower with two daughters, marries a wild sea-girl, Ellida, the daughter of the lighthouse-keeper. The doctor places her in his home to be his toy—his own daughters even taking the cares of the house. Ellida is an idle, useless thing, a beautiful luxury. All goes well till her child dies; then comes the hollowness of her empty life upon her. She craves for the swing and roar and wild life of the sea—for the swirl of the rushing tides, the deep thunder of the great waters, the rude kiss of the salt-breath'd gale upon her face—for freedom and her own way. Her husband bores her.

On to the scene comes a man from the sea, who claims her as his wife, as they once threw their rings together into the sea and pledged themselves to each other; but he had to fly for

killing his captain. She is drawn with dreadful force by this man—says she must go away with him.

The doctor is furious. But she points out that he could only lock her up if he would prevent her; and she asks what comfort it would be to him to possess her body when her heart is with the man from the sea.

To the doctor's question to the man from the sea whether he thinks he can force her away, the seaman baffles him by answering that he has no desire for her unless she come of her own free will.

She demands the right to choose, and be free, if she wishes it, to go back to the sea with her first love.

The doctor sorrowfully sees that the real woman at heart cares nothing for church-made marriage nor for law-made marriage when against these things there is the real marriage of her desire. He ceases the conventional world-gabble about his rights and responsibilities and her duty to him, and, heavy

at heart, he bows to her right to choose her own life.

At once she feels the responsibility of her womanhood when she is free; at once she becomes an individual instead of the slave to another's individuality that has been thrust upon her; her irresponsible, rudderless whims vanish; she waves good-bye to the man from the sea, and goes to the man whose affection holds her—for the enjoyment of individuality now lies before her, to guide her to health and happiness and contentment and the round of the day's duty.

Without freedom of choice, can be no real development. A woman, like a man, can be ennobled only from within, not from without. Will and discipline can only be made by self; not compelled on one by others. Outside will, being imposed, destroys the individual will and slays the individual.

The play is fragrant of the sea; full of the mystery and haunting elusiveness and echo of

the great waters; rich with the glamour of romance; and marked with poetic passages of tense effect—perhaps none more beautiful than that in which Ellida tells her step-daughter Hilda of her desire to go away, since there is nothing for her to do in this home, and learns that the girl loves her—the restless woman realises that there is someone to live for.

But it does not play well enough on the stage. The realistic form in which it is set breaks down the poetic fragrance of the idea—the realism of the form is too robust a machine to give utterance to the light, poetic fancy of the comedy; and what would have been dainty and charming in a lyric, is rendered clumsy and harsh, and even ridiculous on the stage. The rough framework of modernity strains and tears through the gossamer fabric of its fancy and delicatesse.

The play is wholly unconvincing before the footlights. Ellida's craving for the sea, her troth to the man from the sea, her actions, never grip our senses and become real.

In *The Lady from the Sea*, Ibsen returned to the dramatic falsity of symbolism and the haziness of artistic statement that results from it—to say nothing of the fogginess of emotion which it creates.

It is true that he is forever denying, and that too with hot indignation, this symbolism; but if the sea and the man from the sea are not here symbolically employed they are futile, and the only beauty in the play is destroyed. Yet to dig for hidden symbols in the swift action of a play is disastrous to that "illusion of reality" for which Ibsen strove, and rightly strove, as the essence of dramatic statement. The fact is that symbolism is an intellectual, not an emotional, appeal—always.

The dramatic illusion is here constantly broken, as broken it must be the moment we think a thing instead of feeling it—the moment we argue the point.

He shows here also, in several scenes, infirmity of dramatic grip—as in the unconvinc-

ingness of the episode between the stranger, the husband, and the wife. Instead of arousing a sense of awe, it rouses a tendency to titter. He shows an even greater infirmity by the contradiction of his main idea—Ellida is for abandoning her husband because he has "become a stranger to her"; but she is going to a man who is an even greater stranger to her! Again, her marriage is not a "true marriage" because she did not enter into it with perfect freedom of will; but she is going to the stranger whose only hold over her is that "when he is near she has no will of her own." She married her husband in order to be provided for—she is leaving him because he provides for her too much!

Let us grant symbolism to the stage.

The fearful attraction of the vague figure of the man from the sea, and of the sea itself, may embody woman's indefinable yearning for freedom from restraint with her half-fearful attraction by the unknown—it may embody

woman's love of sexual adventures, for a woman at heart has a preference for what she calls romance to the humdrum of everyday life. Then again it may not. When the fascination that strange adventures into the unknown have for Ellida is blown up into wreckage by her elderly husband's offer to give her free choice, and she is brought back to him by the prospect of "liberty with responsibility," it somehow leaves us cold. The effect is as of a woman selling her longing for adventure and the mysteries for a copy-book maxim.

With *The Lady from the Sea* begins a new phase in Ibsen's work—"the element of the future."

XIX.

In the June of 1889, *A Doll's House* was produced in London; the printing-press was now pouring forth English translations from Ibsen's plays; and faction thundered and screamed against faction in English and American journals.

Hedda Gabler

By the August of 1890, Ibsen was settled in Munich, in rooms "lofty and handsome but unattractive," as seen by William Archer; and had established his favourite table at the Café Max. He was in fine health, alert, cheerful—his fame in England and America a "fairy-tale to him."

It was about this time that he contradicted throughout the press of the world the lying interview that had been foisted upon the leading English literary paper, *The Daily Chronicle* in which he had been made to show anger at Bernard Shaw's classing him as a socialist. He declared that he never belonged, and probably never would belong, to any party whatsoever; "but had been pleasantly surprised to find that English Socialists, working on scientific lines, had arrived at conclusions similar to his own."

In July of this year, Bernard Shaw delivered his address, afterwards elaborated into *The Quintessence of Ibsenism.*

In October, Ibsen was deep in a new play. In November it was finished, with the title of *Hedda Gabler*. He called the heroine by her maiden name to pronounce the fact of her being "her father's daughter rather than her husband's wife."

Hedda is "an amazon in a riding habit." She represents in Norway much that a woman of the "smart set" represents in the more aristocratic society of England. She yearns for liveried lackeys and smart surroundings, mistaking these things for refinement of living. She has all the snobbery and innate vulgarity of her English sister—envy of another woman's hair and the like. She has a limitless curiosity, and a limitless shamelessness in the indulgence of it, as to the lowest adventures and the lives of her dissipated men friends, with whom she is on the most intimate terms of confidence, and the most sordid details of whose debauches she eagerly and feverishly enjoys.

Hedda Gabler

She has but one ideal, one god—Caste. She has but one curb upon her ill-disciplined will—Public Scandal. Public opinion is the sole thing that she dreads. She is without heart and without courage—she has not even the courage to give herself to the man she nearest comes to loving. Energetic by nature, and of great beauty, she is nevertheless jealous, envious, and mean. She has the insolence of the bully, and a cowardice that hates to see others happy and that will commit any cruelty to prevent it. Without worth, without ability, she has gifts that can do nothing but wreck and destroy.

The daughter of a general, a widower who has little to leave her but a brace of pistols and pride of birth, Hedda Gabler sees that she must, through poverty, lose the only thing she values, her social position, unless she marries one who is well-to-do and a gentleman.

She is on intimate terms with a miserable youth, the drunken and dissipated genius Luv-

borg, about the vicious side of whose blackguardly life, that is so carefully ignored or sharply condemned or treated with silence by society, she has the intense curiosity of a morbidly sensual nature, like all creatures of vicious instincts. So the young rake Luvborg is in the habit of telling her his most disreputable adventures in long secret confidences, whilst the old general drowses over his newspaper. But when Luvborg at last makes an advance upon her honour, though all her innate unchastity is roused, her dread of scandal makes her order him out of the house with much show of outraged purity, under threat of one of the hereditary pistols.

She is forthwith utterly bored.

A mad plunging into a whirl of dances brings no husband. She, in despair, falls back on a good-natured simpleton of a professor, one George Tesman, whom she patronises as a being of a lower class, and whose family she detests.

She is revolted at the prospect of the child that is coming of this marriage. Bored to death, she starts another of her dangerous intimacies with an elderly rake of her old clique, who promptly sets himself to overcome her by getting some hold over her; whilst she keeps him in his place with the old threat of the pistols.

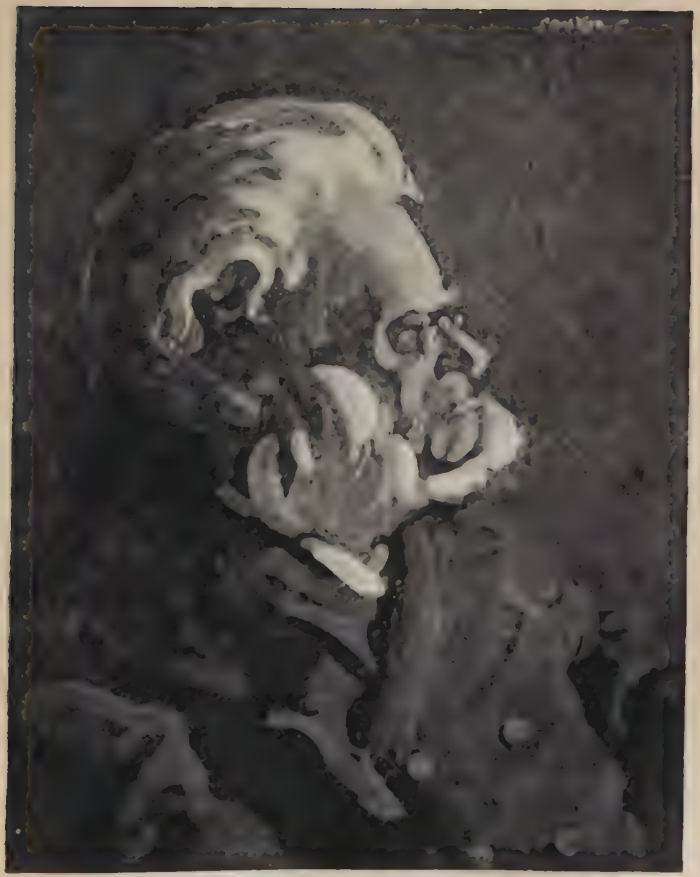
Luvborg, a slave to drink—being a genius, he is of course too romantic to call it drink, he has "vine-leaves in his hair"—finds the university showing a distaste for his lectures on civilisation; and being stranded, becomes a tutor in an out-of-the-way town to the children of a hard-fisted old sheriff, one Elvsted, who has married Thea, their governess, to get her services cheaper for his motherless little ones. Luvborg's comradeship opens a new life to Thea, from whom he conceals his debauches, having taken the measure of the woman, and for whom he ceases his drinking, and to whom he reveals his literary dreams. A book makes him famous; and, with the fair-copy of his

second in her handwriting, which he calls "their child," he goes off to town, money jingling in his pocket.

Thea Elvsted is a very different woman from Hedda. She knows that without her Luvborg will become a drunkard again, and that her own life will be a hell. She must either sin against herself or against the marriage to which she has sold herself. She follows Luvborg to town.

She goes to Hedda, who was an old schoolfellow and is just back from her honeymoon; and, as George Tesman is an old friend of Luvborg's, she persuades them to ask him to the house to keep him away from the bottle.

Luvborg is soon on intimate terms with Hedda again, and twits her with the taunt that cowardice is her armour of virtue. She is in the mood to think that what she has always lacked is the courage to do wrong; and she is soon convinced that Luvborg's overtures to her were really romantic. For the conquest



Ibsen in Old Age

Joseph Simpson

of this man she sets him drinking again, merely to feel that she has the power over him, and because she wishes to put her strength over him to the test against that of a woman whose influence has been strong enough to keep him from the wine-lees.

Fiercely jealous of Thea, she taunts Luvborg one day with Thea's influence over him; and he, like the cowardly weakling he is, promptly goes and gets the vine-leaves in his hair. In a drunken brawl at the house of a disreputable woman, he gets into a scrape with the police by accusing the woman of stealing his manuscript, which he has as a matter of fact left at Tesman's, and, being found by Tesman, is handed over to the jealous Hedda.

Luvborg, returning to the Tesman's, takes the romantic-poetic pose, and tragically announces to Thea that he has torn the manuscript to pieces and flung it into the fiord. No sooner has poor Thea left the room, than, in tragic-romantic vein, he tells what he con-

ceives to be the truth, which he knows will appeal to Hedda more—that he has lost it in a house of ill-fame. She forthwith gives him one of her brace of pistols, and, showing him that there is nothing left for him after such a scandal but to die, tells him to "do it beautifully." And he, with unblushing pose, takes it tragically, and as tragically departs. Hedda promptly burns the hated manuscript.

Luvborg goes back to the disreputable house, and in the violent quarrel that takes place, threatens the woman with the pistol, and gets shot in the scuffle instead.

It so happens that the evil old rake who has been pursuing Hedda recognises the pistol of the tragedy. He comes to Hedda and describes the whole sordid reality of Luvborg's death. And whilst she is brooding over the way in which the poser "did it beautifully," the old scoundrel at her side puts the fact very plainly to her that he has it in his power to tell the police to whom the pistol belongs. She realises that she must become the crea-

ture of this vile old man, or else face the scandal of being mixed up with a squalid murder in a house of ill-fame. Thea, after the first few moments of anguish at Luvborg's death, is soon seated quite happily, with George Tesman, rebuilding Luvborg's book from his rough sketch. Hedda sees that, for the first time, George Tesman has forgotten his beautiful wife; sees that she has lost Luvborg, and is losing Tesman; hears the old villain at her side craftily insinuate that he will undertake her pleasure whilst Tesman is occupied.

But the old rake has not reckoned with Hedda's only inheritance—the fear of scandal and the pistol. She knows that one pistol is charged now with her destruction whatever befalls; and she goes out and slays herself with the other. With the last shred of her inheritance she saves and buries it all.

Here Ibsen takes a woman whom the conventional world would accept as a heroine who

prefers death to dishonour, and another whom convention would look upon as an abandoned creature who deserts the man she has sworn to love, honour, and obey. And he asks if the one be really worthy of admiration, the other worthy of blame.

In *Hedda Gabler* we have Ibsen's favourite group of characters: the genius Luvborg between two women, the fierce Hedda and the gentle Thea; and for foil the weaker man George Tesman. And we have the old ironic finish to the drama—the fool of the play, the despised man, inherits the gentle woman.

It is a powerful play; and shows Ibsen's highest dramatic gifts. He keeps a severe hand on his details as a rule; but he has here allowed himself a dangerous stage effect, and gets a fall. He allows Luvborg to give details of the work of genius that he is writing, with almost comically futile results that quite destroy one's belief in the scamp's genius. It is always safest to take a work of genius for

granted in novel or play. This again is due to Ibsen's occasional lapse into an appeal to the intellect instead of to the emotions.

XX.

In 1891, a London theatre opened its doors to *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*.

In March the old poet, now sixty-three, heard from his sister Hedvig that the new public hall was to be opened in his native town of Skien—but the town as he knew it was wholly departed, fire and storm and stress had blotted out its face—the house where he was born and spent his childhood and the old church were burnt down; "all the objects of my early recollections have been burned—every one of them."

It was in this year that Ibsen, a white-haired man with the shuffling gait of old age, packed up his treasured pictures and his belongings and returned to Norway. He made his home in a flat in Christiania in the Viktoria Terrasse.

The days of his exile were done.

His was an European figure; his fame was world-wide. The people watched him with eyes of awe, as he took his daily stroll down the Karl Johann's Gade to his favourite window at the café of the Grand Hotel. Legends and stories grew about his name.

He left his land unappreciated, poor, unknown. He returned, a man of vast repute.

He made his home at last amongst his own people—still suspicious of his welcome. As he grimly said, "If the Norwegians are troublesome, the railway can soon take me off again." But the old enmity was at an end. He was now surrounded with affection and enthusiasm —a source of national pride.

During the twenty-seven years of his self-inflicted exile, his secret longing for his native land had become at times almost unbearable—he craved for the sea that had swung and thundered through his youth, and called to him out of the blood of the sea-folk, his forefathers.

But he came home in vain—his longing could not be satisfied. "The man who has made his home in strange lands never in his heart finds a home anywhere—not even in his own land." He had been away too long—he could not settle comfortably, could not fit himself. The old poet, the mind-voyager, was soon longing to be off again—out into the wide world. His eyes turned to Denmark. But he had cast anchor in Christiania; and never again set foot across the face of the world.

The year after his return (1892), Ibsen's only son married one of Byornsen's daughters; and the friendship between the two men was closer knit by family ties.

Ibsen seems now to have looked at the grey problem of old age. He sees the present generation eagerly stepping into the shoes of the old generation, and ousting it with the cruelty of nature. He sees the present generation itself insecure, realising that that which it has done to the old generation will the coming

generation do to it in time. The younger generation is knocking at its doors. And all its jealousy of the younger generation, all its desire to keep it under, so that it may hold power as long as possible, are futile. The highest that it builds it can itself only reach up to with giddiness, where the younger generation can climb with ease.

In Christiania at the age of sixty-four he wrote *The Master Builaer*, and its three acts are haunted with this knocking of the younger generation at the doors and its usurpation of the kingship—stated with that skill of poetic statement that was Ibsen's mighty gift. But for dramatic purposes the motive was too subtle, even in Ibsen's skilful fingers; and the play, though mighty poetry, suffers from all that distracting curse of symbolism that makes but half-statement of truths, and that, too, to the intellect instead of to the emotions. A rare poem it is; a great play it is not. Ibsen goes back even more that he did in *The Lady*

from the Sea to his great dramatic poems; and might be almost said to desert the stage were it not for the haunting power with which he at least suggests what is too subtle for the stage's utterance.

This, his great, symbolical, dramatic poem, haunts the mind in astounding fashion—there are "harps in the air." Its superb artistry as poetry leaves a profound impress upon the mind. Yet its dramatic action, in spite of its exquisite stage-craft, proceeds without gripping our belief, or compelling our sympathy.

It is, says this one, the tragedy of a great artist. It is, says the other, the tragedy of something else. And so on. The symbol leaves a dozen interpretations.

Solness, the master-builder, has passed the prime of life. He has brutally crushed artists of an older generation; and is almost insanely fearful of being crushed by the artist of the younger generation. He has ruined old Bro-

vik; and then taken him into his office under him. Old Brovik's son Ragnar he has also taken into his office; and him he begins to dread—with fierce cunning he filches Ragnar's credit—yet already people want Ragnar to do independent work for them. He sees that Ragnar is the artist of the younger generation. If the young fellow can only get Solness's approval written upon his design, he can not only get the work done, but old Brovik will die happy. Solness will not do it.

He is unscrupulously regardless of others in his fierce will to keep his supreme position as an artist; but he is torn with self-torture in his remorse for his victims.

Ragnar's cousin, the girl Kaia, he has taken into his office also, as she and her cousin were so much in love that he feared their marriage would be a hot incentive to Ragnar to leave him and start work on his own account.

The master-builder has a strange power over women; and has secretly won the girl away

from Ragnar—not from love of her—but to enable her to aid him in keeping Ragnar under his will. For he has noticed that the successful man is not necessarily he who has the greatest genius, but he who has the strong will to make others serve him.

He begins by building churches.

His first step to fame comes through the burning of his wife's old home. But he loses his children in consequence. He builds his last church, and though heights have always made him giddy, he himself climbs to the top of his high tower and, bracing himself to the courage required, places the crowning wreath upon the vane—and there and alone, tells his God that since his work for Him has been rewarded by loss of his children and his home, he will no more work for Him, but build instead "homes for human beings."

There happens to be at the house where he is staying a girl, Hilda Wangel, entering upon her teens, who takes a violent fancy to the

master-builder, and it is she amongst the white-robed schoolgirls who cheers and waves to him when he is at the pinnacle's dizzy height. He kisses the child Hilda "many times" and promises her a kingdom and that he will come back for her in ten years to lead her into it.

Solness's wife, Aline, is a simple, pious, dutiful, jealous woman, who is not broken by the death of her children, since it is her duty to be thankful that they are happy in heaven, but by the loss at the fire of the old family portraits, the old dresses that had belonged to the dead generations, the old lace, and jewels—above all, the dolls she had played with as a child.

Solness's nurseries that he has built for his home are empty; the wife chosen in his youth has not kept pace with him in his development, but lives with her toys; she has become but a hindrance to him; he has no real home; he looks upon it as a right that for his loss of happiness and home he should remain ruthlessly supreme in his art.

He is brooding over this ugly threat of the younger generation knocking at his doors, when there comes a knocking.

Hilda Wangel, a breezy young woman, full of the thrill to live life, enters to tell him that the ten years are up; and she wants her kingdom. For ten years she has lived upon this promise. Into the room where he sits brooding with dread of the hostility of youth, she comes with her youth, full of faith in, and enthusiasm for, him. She has youth's craving for excitement, for strong emotions, for daring feats. She has youth's courage. She wants to live. She must see him climb once again and place a wreath upon the topmost summit of his highest tower. A man must not be afraid to climb to the top of the highest thing he builds.

But he has become giddy—and afraid of his giddiness.

The giddiness must go. She will not have it said that her master-builder dare not, nor cannot, climb as high as he builds.

We must live the ideals we create.

She is stricken when she realises his terror and the meaning of his acts towards Ragnar. She will give him youth. She makes him sign his approval of Ragnar's drawings, and send them at once by Kaia.

Nobility of purpose comes back to the man; and he frees Kaia and Ragnar from servitude —though too late for dying old Brovik to know it.

He offers her the highest room in the tower of his new house that he has built upon the ruins of his old home. But even her "robust conscience" is filled with compassion for his wife. She must reject her happiness. There is left to her only the happiness of his spiritual comradeship, her castle in the air. He can find no happiness on earth; so they decide to build castles in the air that they may climb thereto hand in hand. Their intimacy becomes closer, more hopeless. But Hilda cannot step to happiness across the body of the wife.

The day has arrived for crowning the build-

ing that Solness has built over his old home; and Hilda insists on his placing the wreath upon the topmost vane—he must "do the impossible once again." Solness has told her that he will do it, and when he reaches it, he will tell the Creator that he has done with building, he is going down to seek happiness and the joys of life—that he is going from his last work to a princess whom he will take in his arms and kiss many times—then he will wave his hat and come down to the earth and do what he said he would do.

He climbs up with the wreath—up to the topmost height—the assembled townsfolk with bands and applause watching him. Hilda sees him place the wreath—hears "harps in the air"—sees him wave his hat to her—

Then he falls with a crash.

Amidst the startled people, Hilda stands—and waves her shawl—"But he mounted right to the top—and I heard harps in the air—*my, my* Master Builder!"

Ibsen

If a man fall from his ideals in order to be at peace with the world, his nature is lowered. Better climb to his ideals; for, even though he die for them, the glory of the striving will make up for all. It will be "frightfully thrilling."

So Ibsen would seem to write upon the wall.

Or a man may reach to the ideal of his own age, but he cannot reach the ideal of the coming age—and live.

The symbol creates the puzzle. And no work of art should need a book of explanations. The symbols defeat the realities. The realities tread on the heels of the symbol. Symbol trips the sense. People ask how an architect's climbing one of his own spires affects the grandeur of his building or the splendour of his art—indeed, whether height is the supreme quality of the magnificence of architecture.

Ibsen was wont to grow querulous over the finding of symbols in his plays where none

were meant; and indeed the ingenuity displayed in search for them was preposterous. But symbolism he did only too often employ. And *The Master Builder*, robbed of its symbolism, becomes a futility.

XXI.

Ibsen's vogue brought him cares. "I have, unfortunately, far more German translators than I desire," he complains. To protect himself from unscrupulous translators he had to publish "authorised" German editions that appeared at the same time as his Norwegian editions.

In 1894, he wrote in three acts one of the saddest of his plays; it touches upon the relation of the parents to the child. The play is marked by a strange dislike to the healthy human relations of man and wife. The trying back from realism of his later works to the romanticism of his middle period of dramatic poems, is maintained—for, whilst he still uses

the realistic machinery and form, the atmosphere is no longer completely amongst the realities.

Allmers, a man of letters and once a tutor, has married Rita, a woman with "gold and green forests"; and they have a crippled child, the boy Eyolf. Allmers and his half-sister Asta have grown up together from childhood, and are the complement of each other's souls.

Allmers has come home from brooding in the mountains; he has realised of a sudden that what he ought to be giving to his ailing, lonely child he is giving to his book, his "life-work" on *Human Responsibility*.

Engineer Borgheim, "the road-maker," is in love with Asta; but Asta's heart is occupied by her brother.

Little Eyolf wrings his father's heart by wanting to be a soldier, and a boy as other boys are, who can swim and shoot and play.

There enters the Rat-Wife. She lures all

"gnawing things" out of people's houses, and they follow her to the sea and drown. In a bag she has a little dog that helps her in her weird business. There is an ugly suspicion that she lures children, too. When she is gone, the little Eyolf slips away unnoticed, to play.

Asta, left alone with Allmers, tells him she has been through the family papers, and has brought him her mother's letters; and she is hinting that there is something very strange in them, that he *must* read, when Rita suddenly comes in.

Rita, a full-blooded, sensual woman, is bitterly jealous of her husband's affection for their boy—jealous of her husband's affection for his sister, for whose marriage with the blithe-hearted "road-maker" she is always now manoeuvring—jealous of his book. On Asta's retiring, Rita bitterly attacks her husband for his coldness, wishes her boy had never been born to come between them, and almost wishes the Rat-Wife had taken him, and she fiercely

jeers at him that when he came home she had dressed herself in an alluring white gown, let down her hair, lighted the rooms to add to their allure, and "there was champagne on the table" so that they might revel in passion—but though she had begun to undress, he could talk only about little Eyolf's digestion—and had got into bed, and slept like a log.

Suddenly, there is a commotion outside; and the town children cry out that "the crutch is floating"—little Eyolf has been drowned . . .

Allmers sits by the hour and watches the tide that has swept his child away. Surely, he broods, there must be meaning in it all! Life and destiny cannot be so utterly meaningless.

Rita comes and talks about the child, but Allmers turns upon her and reminds her that she wished the child harm; reminds her also that the child would never have been lamed if it had not been for that mad hour when he left it neglected on the table to go to her arms.

Asta breaks into the scene, and on being left alone with Allmers he tells her he cannot live with Rita any more. He and Asta will go away together—the love of a brother and sister is the only relation of life that is not subject to the law of change. Asta says it can never be again as it was, for, in her mother's letter is her confession that Allmers' father was not Asta's father—they are not brother and sister! She is, like him, overwhelmed with passion. But she is suddenly overwhelmed with Rita's dread of being left alone, says good-bye to both, and goes away with the blithe-hearted "road-maker," leaving Allmers and Rita to win together again through the love and care of little neglected children.

It was in this play that Ibsen gave to the world his phrase of "the law of change."

Here again we have the realism of the play befogged by symbolism. It is quite clear that Ibsen was honest in his irritation with those

who tried to find in the Rat-Wife an inner and mystic symbolism which he said he did not intend. And it is in a way needless to go behind the simple fact of his own explanation that he employed the well-known Norse superstition of the Rat-Wife only in order "to account for the disappearance of little Eyolf." But if we accept Ibsen's idea that the Rat-Wife is to be a commonplace incident, it so happens that we destroy one of the few symbols that are so obvious as to be legitimate for dramatic purposes. In using so abnormal an incident in a realistic picture of life as the Rat-Wife superstition, Ibsen risked losing the illusion of Reality; but he was treating of death, which is an elusive reality, and he realises the sense of death thereby with consummate power. The death of the child haunts the play, clutches at our throats, sends a sob into our hearts, grips the attention, spreads the tragic thread throughout the warp and woof of the drama with an overwhelming and majestic force. And

what is far more astounding, far more significant, the incidents of the Rat-Wife and of the child's death thrust the elusive Unseen Figure of death before the footlights, so that it stands silent but present in every shadow, at the window, by the door, upon the waters, never absent, in a manner that is almost hellishly real. This man's supreme skill makes us to see the unseen. Never has death so walked the stage as in this play. It is the very triumph of art—the emotional realisation of a thing that cannot be done by thought, but only suggested through the senses. It is all the more astounding when we realise that it is done in commonplace surroundings, and in a play in which the action and the realistic life portrayed are at times appallingly suburban. Ibsen in this play commits an unforgivable and deplorably inartistic blunder. He makes a most important effect depend on the audience knowing another man's poem—and that, too, by no means a widely diffused poem. The reference to the

champagne must be completely misunderstood by, if not wholly unintelligible to, such as do not know the poem. An unknown man is called a coward by a bevy of noisy students for not drinking a health to Poland; but he shows the scars of wounds he has received for Poland, turns on his heels with contempt of their windy oratory, and walks out of the place. The students are silenced with shame. *There stood their champagne; but they did not touch it.* Its allusion to a man who talks but does not act necessitates knowledge of the poem. A picture should never need "a book of the words" to explain it.

Ibsen here strips bare the ideal of the child binding husband and wife together. It is quite true that, on the contrary, the child often comes between and separates them; but Ibsen himself here flinches from his task, and seems to realise that he is treating of the exception, not the rule. His grim irony strips bare also

the ideal of that strange love that is between brother and sister, and shows that even this is largely a matter of convention—what was quite pure in brother and sister becomes an impropriety when it is discovered that they are not brother and sister. But the love is there all the same.

XXII.

In the summer of 1895, Mr. Tree added greatly to Ibsen's and his own repute in England by producing *An Enemy of the People* at the Haymarket Theatre in London.

In the following April Ibsen was deep in a new dramatic work in four acts—*John Gabriel Borkman*—given to the world at the end of the year.

In this play he again returns to the shattering of the ideal that parents have joy and comfort in their children, even though love may have died between themselves. And he satirises grimly, as he goes, the Nietschian ideal of

the Overman that was coming into fashion, as "the higher rascality," in John Gabriel Borkman. It is the fault of the suburban atmosphere in which Ibsen sought for the illusion of realism, that it is difficult to make a banker convincing as the blonde, ruthless overman of Nietsche. Indeed, the decline in convincingness of realism that set in with *The Lady from the Sea*, to be checked only by *Hedda Gabler*, and continued through *The Master Builder* and *Little Eyolf*, is still more pronounced in *John Gabriel Borkman;* whilst, on the other hand, Ibsen's power to seize the elusive and the supernatural, that was so astounding in the dramatic poems, seems steadily to increase. And as Ibsen reaches to the stern wisdom and gentleness of old age his forbearance to human failings and his compassion grow.

John Gabriel Borkman, the bankrupt and fraudulent manager who has ruined his bank, his relations, his friends, and the hoarded sav-

ings of strangers, in his lust for power, flinging everything of which he had the care into wildest speculation, ruthless of the love of women, of friends, and of dependents, finds himself broken by the world he had dreamed to conquer—a convict and a despised thing.

The noble woman, Ella, for whom he had what passionate love he was capable of feeling, he sells to his fellow bank-director, Hinkel, for that man's aid in giving him power. He marries her self-centred and tyrannical sister instead. As long as Borkman lives like a king, the world adores him, and his wife is splendidly happy. But Borkman has not reckoned on the nobility of Ella, who refuses to be sold to Hinkel; and Hinkel, growing alarmed at Borkman's speculations, protecting himself, betrays Borkman. When the crash comes, Borkman, a convict, is detested by all save an old clerk, of poetic ambitions, whom he has ruined. Borkman finds that the lust for power is a madman's dream—but he clings to it. The

one thing that his ruthless hands have spared is his sister-in-law Ella's securities; and she, having purchased the old manor-house, gives it to the released convict and his wife.

In the old manor-house of the Borkmans', the old splendour growing dingy and neglected, his wife occupies the lower rooms, and he the upper tapestried galleries—apart and separate, hating each other, she with her dreams of respectability in wreckage, he with his dream of power in wreckage. They have one hope—*he* looks to his son to grow up and help him to reach to power again, *she* looks to her son to help her to reach a splendid respectability again.

Ella has taken the son, Erhart, and brought him up. When the play opens the young fellow is staying in the capital hard by, and the two women, mother and aunt, are at duel for his possession. His mother wants him in order to impose her ideal of respectability upon him. His aunt wants him for the love of him and

his father. His father wants him to help him back to power.

But the young fellow wants to live—refuses to have the "claims" and ideals of the passing generation imposed upon him. He has no craving for "power," has no desire to be a genius, has no wish for splendid respectability, does not care for work, has no slightest desire to be a solace to his dying benefactress, Ella, during the last few days the noble-hearted woman has to live. He goes off with a divorced woman of wealth, Mrs. Wilton, who, while she wishes for joy with the young fellow, takes abroad with her also as a companion a young girl upon whom Erhart can fall back if he gets tired of herself. The sleigh in which they drive away knocks down the poor old clerk, whose daughter is being borne away. Such is the return he gets for slaving and toiling to bring up his children.

The creation of John Gabriel Borkman, the dreamer who would compel the world by dig-

ging the gold out of the earth where it lies buried, singing to him to go and take it and so possess dominion over the earth—the man who mistakes himself for a world-power—is a rare achievement. How dramatically Ibsen introduces him during that first act, never seen, only heard by the pacing of his restless feet in the room above! The very vastness of the folly of the man compels our pity. Every character is drawn with consummate skill; the play is constructed with unerring craftsmanship; yet, the last curtain comes down leaving us weary, a little baffled, not wholly convinced —largely due to the unreality of the last act.

XXIII.

On the eve of Ibsen's seventieth year was planned the now famous complete German edition of his works, in their order as written.

In the summer of this 1897, he was dreaming and planning to make his

home near the Sound between Copenhagen and Elsinore, "on some free, open spot, whence I can see all the sea-going ships starting on, or returning from, their long voyages. . . . Here all the Sounds of intelligence are closed, and all the Channels blocked. Ah, it is not without consequence that a man lives for twenty-five years in the wider, emancipated and emancipating spiritual life of the great world! Up here, by the fiords, is my native land; but—but—but—where am I to find my home land? In my loneliness here I am planning a new drama but—"

In the spring of 1898, on his seventieth birthday, he was presented by his English-speaking adherents with a large silver goblet, called by the pedants "ciborium," which was placed by Ibsen in a place of honour in his house. Why a goblet, heaven only knows.

He again entertained the idea of writing an

account of the circumstances of his life and of the state of thought and feeling out of which each of his plays was born, to display the steady and consistent development of his ideas. Unfortunately, as he had before done under Hegel's advice, he set aside the intention and turned to brooding upon a new drama.

He moved, this year, into a house on the Drammensvei, one of the handsomest in the city of Christiania, faced by the Royal Gardens.

We have a picture of him in his last years, settled in Norway's capital, the chief source of Norway's pride. He is not unconscious of it. In sunshine or in rain, he walks down Karl Johann's Gade to his favourite seat in the window or on the balcony of the Grand Hotel—sometimes twice, if the weather be fine. And when he goes, the town knows that it is close on the stroke of one in the afternoon or eight in the evening as though the clocks struck.

He lives by the clock. From the bottle of

brandy and the bottle of sparkling water that the waiter sets upon the table beside him, he measures with druggist care his liquor in his glass as though to a prescription; and sips his half-hour away with such pious regularity that the young wags measure the passage of the minute-hand half round the clock by the shrinkage of the liquor in his glass. He fills a second glass and drinks the minute-hand through the complete round of the clock. And, the second heel-tap gone, he rises and gets him home again, the gazed at, melancholy man of Norway.

His habitations in his wanderings, even when success came to him, had never been much more than the unattractive lodgings whence a man is prepared to flit on the morrow. It was only when he settled in his Christiania flat, at last, that he seemed at home.

He spent his seventieth year brooding over the scheme of his new play; but the Christmas of 1898 came and went, with no drama from

the hand of Ibsen. The old lion was failing. The hand and will were becoming enfeebled; the clock-like habits running down. It was the last Christmas of the eighteen-hundreds before he gave his next play to the world; and it bore the ominous title *When We Dead Awaken.*

It bore traces of decay. The illusion of reality is wholly flung aside, the form of the realistic drama alone remains—a theatric skeleton.

Here, with the grimmest of all irony, he set up his life-work at the bar of judgment, to strip it naked, and to pour the scalding satire of his genius upon it. Is the artistic life worth the living, even when success crowns all? Has it not been striven for by the artist with the agony and sweat of his life's toil, simply to wed that same respectability and worldly success for which the worthy merchant works? And all the while has he not let life slip through his fingers—real, tingling, glorious life? Whilst he has grubbed like the sculptor in the dank

cellar that he calls his studio, has not life gone jigging past his doors laughing and gay in the sunlight?

In this same last year of the eighteen-hundreds that saw his hand write his last masterpiece, on the first night of September, Ibsen and Byornsen sat side by side, honoured by the whole nation, at the opening of the National Theatre—the creators of a drama that had gone forth across the face of the whole world.

XXIV.

Ibsen saw with shrewd eyes that the time had come for silence.

In his seventy-fourth year he collected his *Works*.

Soon afterwards he was forbidden any brain-work.

He walked to his grave not wholly alone.

His home and his nation looked upon him with pride.

In his seventy-fifth year he turned to Byornsen with tears in his eyes and his heart overflowing: "After all, it is you I have loved best."

He lived to see Norway awakening to her needs; and much for which he fought being realised—manhood suffrage; the freedom of women; the national schools rid of the church's control.

In his seventy-sixth year appeared his *Correspondence;* but Ibsen was now quite unconscious of what was passing in the world. He who had watched that world with eagle eye, was stricken down. He had an apoplectic seizure. He slowly recovered, only to be struck down a second time. The shadow of illness fell across his life. Seizure after seizure wore him down.

Rumour went flying—to be denied—and whispered abroad again, that he was failing.

At last Ibsen lay a-dying.

With that grim irony that had dogged

him all his life, the state, that he had browbeaten and hated, sent her three greatest physicians to his healing; there was a constant procession of callers at his door making anxious enquiry; the nation that sent him packing into exile a beggar, stood with bared head of reverence to read his bulletins; presents were brought—fruit and wines and flowers—and at the kindly acts Ibsen smiled contentment; but his lower limbs were failing him; he lay in bed, death creeping slowly from his feet to the stout old heart.

Fault-finding, quarrelsome, fretful, irritable beyond describing he became; but the brain dreamed on. He wrote for a couple of hours a day. At last the pen fell from his hand.

On the night of the twenty-second of May in 1906, he had an apoplectic seizure from which he never rallied, and died in the early afternoon of the following day, in his seventy-eighth year.

He was buried in state by the nation.

At his death, his fame and his influence were world-wide; he died forty years after he wrote, on the near eve of his fortieth year: "I will and shall have a victory some day."

"*Created things, though fair we*
find them,
Have FINIS somewhere graved
behind them."

No, no, not "Finis," let them be winnowed,
And we shall read: "To be continued"

J. T.

Some *of the* Best Books *upon* Ibsen

The Life of Henrik Ibsen, by H. Jaeger—an interesting biography which had the benefit of Ibsen's supervision.

The Quintessence of Ibsenism, by G. Bernard Shaw—an excellent and brilliant book; the best yet written on Ibsen's intellect.

Degeneration, by Max Nordau—the most able attack on Ibsen's ideas and genius.

Ibsen and Byornsen, by George Brandes—a series of contemporary criticisms, published during the career of the dramatist.

The Correspondence of Henrik Ibsen.

Northern Studies, by Edmund Gosse.

Various **Essays,** by William Archer.

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